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PREFACE.

THE great success which has attended the publication of the First Volume of the *Canada Presbyterian Church Pulpit*, encourages the publishers to lay before the members of the Church the present volume, the second of the series. It contains, not a collection of pulpit discourses, as was the case with the first series, but a number of treatises, dealing at greater length, and in a more complete manner than any sermon could, with themes of the deepest religious interest. In regard to these the leading doctrines and the practice of our Church are stated, illustrated and defended ; yet in such a manner that the themes never fail of earnest personal application. The names of the various writers are a sufficient guarantee for the sound and Scriptural, hence

PREFACE.

Calvinistic and Presbyterian, nature of the views enun-
ciated in the work. It may thus take its place as a hand-
book of popular theology, fitted to instruct the members
of the Church, and to build them up in their most holy
faith, as well as to set before inquirers, in a simple affec-
tionate way, the things which make wise into salvation.
With the prayer that it may be blessed by the great Head
of the Church for these important ends this Second Series
of the *Canada Presbyterian Church Pulpit* is now sent
forth.

TORONTO, January, 1873.





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CANADA

Presbyterian Church Pulpit.

BY REV. WILLIAM MACKENZIE,
ALMONTE.

“SPIRIT OR FORM?”—THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

WHAT is true worship? It is no empty ceremony, no mere observance, laid on us simply as a burden ; no constrained outward form of respect or homage. True worship is the communion of a living heart with the Living God. Nothing can deprive the true worshipper of that blessed fellowship and communion. It is not confined to time and place. It matters not where he may be,—in the freedom of his own home, or within the bars of a dungeon ; following the plough, or toiling in the deep mine ; walking by the way, or rushing along in the railway train ; in the sanctuary, or in the market-place ; in the midst of worshippers like himself, or amid the frivolity and earthliness gathered together in some scene of worldly splendour or pleasure ; in the quiet closet, when the door is shut about him, or amid the roar and clang of the heaving factory,—it matters not : wherever he may be, there is an open way

for him into the presence and fellowship of the Living God, his Almighty Friend and Father.

And who is He whom we thus worship? "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." And what a blessed light shines upon us from the face of Jesus Christ; and with what a glorious attraction it invests the person of Him whom we worship. If we could imagine the tenderest affection of our most anxious friend, the kindest sympathy of our most considerate friend, the loving wisdom and goodness of our best and wisest friend; and, if we do not merge, but multiply all these by infinity; and invest our friend with infinite knowledge to watch over us, with infinite forethought to care for us, and with infinite power to provide for, and sustain us; *then* we have some glimpse of all we shall find in the Living God—the God whom we worship. "God was manifest in the flesh." We see the light of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. In all the attractions of the matchless character of the Saviour of men we see what God is. We worship no unknown God. We do not address some general law or first principle, but a living person. We do not commune with eternity, but with "Him who inhabiteth eternity," and who maketh the contrite heart, also, His dwelling-place. It is not with abstract goodness that we have fellowship, but with "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," with God in Christ, with Jesus our friend within the veil, with our Father in Heaven.

The words of the Lord Jesus, as He sat at Jacob's well, were first spoken to meet the enquiry of an anxious soul. The Samaritan woman had just become alive to a sense of God's presence, and was now awake to the consciousness of that searching eye, before which all her heart was open. Expressing her first thought or feeling, she begins to enquire *how*, and *where*, she might rightly seek God's face. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, but ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to wor-

ship." In answer to her timid enquiry, our Lord states the ground and manner of all true worship. Not in Gerizim, nor yet at Jerusalem, exclusively. The old dispensation of times and places was ready to vanish away. A larger and freer economy was coming in. "The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

There is a necessity then, from the very nature of God, for spiritual worship. "God is a Spirit," and therefore, only with the spirit can we commune with Him. Any mere bodily service, any outward ceremony, however beautiful and correct, must always remain a mere mockery of worship, where the spirit and heart of the worshipper is not engaged. The eye of God can penetrate through all the outward appearance. He is "the Father of Spirits, the God of the spirits of all flesh." He can discern the innermost thought and inclination of all who draw near to Him. Before Him there is no disguise; however perfect and imposing it may appear in the eyes of men, it is worse than vain before Him who searches the heart.

When the prophet stood among the sons of Jesse, struck with the noble look, and commanding presence of Eliab, his first-born, which seemed to mark him out as a man fit to be a ruler of men, he said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him." But his too hasty judgment called forth the rebuke: "Look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him, for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

True worship then must be worship in spirit. "*The Lord looketh on the heart.*" The Mosaic ritual served the Church of God during the time of infancy and childhood. All its divinely appointed ceremonies were like the pic-

tures wherewith we teach our children, before they come to years. They were but shadows of things to come ; in their very nature transitory, and to give place to that which was more perfect. It is not an advance, it is retrogression—a most humiliating retrogression—a return to these weak and beggarly elements, to devise imposing ceremonies, and to multiply symbolic rites and vestments as aids in the worship of God : to do this *now*, under the dispensation of the Spirit. “The hour now is” when that worship is not confined to time or place, not circumscribed within temple walls, not encumbered with outward ceremony, but when the true worshippers “worship the Father in spirit and in truth.” There was a glory in that old ritual ; but its divinely appointed pageantry of embroidered vestments, fragrant incense, smoking altar, and solemn music has now been eclipsed by a glory that excelleth. These are all as nothing to the real glory of that spiritual worship offered up by a believing soul on the altar of a true heart, the communion of a living heart with the Living God.

It is a memorable era in the history of a man when he becomes first awake to a sense of God’s all-pervading presence, and finds that he can have a closer and more constant intercourse with Him than with any other. His heart is filled with reverence and godly fear, and what a reality all his worship becomes. His experience is like David’s when he says : “O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising. Thou understandest my thoughts afar off.” There is nothing hidden from God’s eye, not even the innermost recess of our own spirit. “Thou art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me ; Such knowledge is too wonderful for me ; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” By no possible effort can we escape from that presence. “Whether shall I go from

Thy spirit?" he asks. "Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" But nowhere, neither in heaven, nor in hell, nor in the uttermost parts of the sea, can he find a place where God is not. No vail can hide us from that piercing eye, for the thickest darkness is as the light to Him.

God is our Creator; the "Father of our spirits." When he formed them with all those secret chambers, where our thoughts and feelings are so easily hidden from our nearest and dearest on earth, He retained in his own hand the master-key which opens every door. Where there is anything to conceal, or any taint of insincerity, it is an appalling thought to know that there exists One to whom all hearts are open, and all desires known. One who judges not by inference and deduction, like men, but who sees at once every bias and propensity of the spirit, and who knows every spring of that intricate and complicated mechanism which connects human motive with human action. And yet there is strength and comfort in that very thought, to the man who desires to stand right with God. However conscious he may be of perpetual infirmities and shortcomings, and none see these more clearly than himself, yet the desire of his soul is towards God; with a sincere heart he seeks His face and favour. He would conceal nothing; it is not his interest to seem other than he really is. Knowing, therefore, that God looketh on the heart, with the awe of His presence, upon his soul, he comes even as David did, and with a like confidence, sends up the same cry. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

When Scripture describes natural men as those who "do not like to retain God in their knowledge," it states the instinctive feeling of every sinful and unforgiven man. He has no desire to remember, or to have anything to do with, that God against whom he has sinned, and with

whom he is not yet reconciled. When conscious guilt first burdened his soul, "Adam hid himself from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." How truly are we the children of Adam, and partakers in his guilty fear ! The thought of God's nearness, that he is compassed about with His spirit, and under the light of His eye, is intolerable to a natural man. He flees from it. Like the stag, dashing into the thicket, or scouring across the wilderness, to escape the hunter, so men plunge into the occupations of life, to leave behind, if possible, the pursuing thought of God. "What a mass of secularities will a man pile up sometimes between his soul and God ; and how affecting it is to follow him even for one day in his flight. He flees from his chamber in the morning that the spirit of seriousness may not settle in his heart. He flees from his house without having felt its highest charm, without having thought of the fatherhood of God, and of the home on high. Along the busy street, seen by every passer-by, he is still in flight ; and as soon as he begins the business of the day he is like one plunging into a forest, and we see him no more. All the day he is fleeing, on and on, through the cares and calculations, through the profits and losses, through the intercourse and correspondence, and all the management and all the toil of the day, he is fleeing." Even in his worship he flees from God. He observes some form, but it is a help to keep God himself at a distance. He likes form and ceremony, even as he dislikes and shrinks from all spiritual worship. He welcomes any substitute for direct contact with the Living God, anything to come between him and that presence.

When Scripture speaks of regenerate men as those "who worship God in the spirit," it describes one of their essential and characteristic features. Their worship is no mere form or outward ceremony, but real, spiritual, that of mind and heart. It is true worship : not false, like that of the idolater ; not merely apparent like that of

the formalist ; not insincere, like that of the hypocrite. In his approach to God a regenerate man is sensible of his presence and nearness, and knows and feels that every thought and imagination of his heart is visible to Him with whom he has to do. Indeed, he carries with him an habitual sense of God's presence ; that He is ever near and acquainted with all his ways. And there is no shrinking from that close and constant companionship ; no desire to hide from God, no expedients to forget him. He can take comfort from the sense of the divine omniscience, for with a true heart he desires God's favour. When once a man is made alive unto God, then, to him, there is no reality like God's presence, no influence like the glance of His all-seeing eye, and no all-pervading power in his life like godly fear.

But we may be alive to God's presence, and yet be unable to take any pleasure in His fellowship. All intercourse must be constrained until we have confidence towards God, until we are at peace with Him. A free, glad worship, can only spring from faith in Jesus Christ: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." When once we have received Christ, and mercy and reconciliation in Him, then indeed there is a fulness of joy in the divine fellowship. The blessed God is now "for us," and not "against us:" and it becomes our high privilege to realize His presence with us, and to make Him our refuge and dwelling-place. Unforgiven sin prevents all confidence on the part of a man. It comes like a cloud between his soul and God ; shutting out the sight of God's glory, and shutting up his own heart against all love. But when sin is forgiven, when the sense of mercy through Christ gladdens his heart, then with an open face, he looks up, saying, "Abba, Father," "the Spirit itself bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God." The long night of alienation and estrangement is now past and gone, and he lives a new life in the light of God's smile. Spiritual worship is the very breath of that

new life ; that true worship which is just to know, and to love, and to serve, and to glorify God.

We must carry this spirit with us into all our *worship, public and private*. Spirit and truth, the living heart in communion with the Living God, give life and reality in our social gatherings, and make the quiet hour in the closet a season of joy and invigoration.

The sanctuary of God is held in high esteem by every spiritual worshipper. It was that place to which the heart of David longed and panted to return, when he wandered in the wilderness, a fugitive from the jealous wrath of King Saul. It was there where Asaph found an antidote for all his distracting doubts with respect to the course of God's providence, and the profit or vanity of serving God, and had his heart quieted by a view of the divine justice, and a sense of the divine presence. There is a power in the social element of our nature which all must acknowledge. The very associations of the sanctuary, the accustomed services, the remembrance of past seasons of refreshing, the multitude of worshippers, the many voices swelling the divine praise, all exert an influence to beget and sustain fervour of spirit. In all ages the saints of God have loved the habitation of his house, and counted the assembling of themselves together there, as one of their chiefest and dearest privileges.

Visitors to Popish lands have often had to remark the visible show of religious feeling, of apparent devotion, meeting them on every hand. Magnificent churches are found everywhere, forming the most noteworthy objects of art and beauty. No pains or cost is spared on their adornment. Their gates are open from morning to night. Entering at any hour, the visitor is sure to see a number of worshippers, reciting their prayers with the utmost self-forgetfulness and fervour. This show of devotion in public, contrasts with the reticence of Protestant lands, where such a display is witnessed only at stated seasons. And yet it would be a grave mistake to imagine that the differ-

ence speaks for their higher degree of the true devotional feeling, or for their greater love for fellowship with God. In our natural unspirituality we find a difficulty in intercourse with God, who is a Spirit. We would like some tangible help. And so, in their blind, perplexed, groping after Him, men seek this by investing His worship with an outward and earthly pomp and majesty. Hence the complicated and gorgeous ritual of Rome. Hence also that ostentatious devotion in open chapels and churches. That springs from the notion, essentially false and misleading, that worship is more acceptable to God *there*, than in any other place. The sanctuary is consecrated, it is holy ground, prayer is more efficacious from that spot, it has a more direct route to heaven ; and the worshipper seeks that place under the power of this persuasion. That show of public devotion is dearly purchased by the almost entire suppression, in those lands, of family and closet worship. The very preference of publicity indicates the absence of the true spirit of worship. The man upon whose spirit there is the awe of the divine presence, and whose heart is thirsting for communion with God, courts retirement, that without distraction he may seek His face. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." God forbid ! that we should ever be led away with the delusions of an empty ritualism ; with its beggarly impositions of holy times and places, postures and garments, music and ceremony. "The hour now is," when, not in one place, nor in one form more than another, but at any time, in any place, "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth : for the Father *seeketh such* to worship Him."

True spirituality is far oftener hindered than helped by aids of man's device. In the first heroic ages of the Church, the upper chamber, or the desert cave—the city catacombs, or the prison cell—were the oratories where the saints of God met for His worship. Oftentimes, from

such sanctuaries, a pure offering rose on high, acceptable to God, soul-refreshing to men. In the inner prison at Philippi, with their feet fast in the stocks, and their backs bleeding from the scourge ; "at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God ; and the prisoners heard them." In the persecuting times in Scotland, two men, barely escaping with their lives from the close pursuit of the dragoons, found a refuge in the rifts of an inaccessible moss-hag. They rested in their concealment until night began to fall. All at once they heard a strain of music, plaintive and sweet, rising on the still air. Intently listening, they at last made out these words :

" Though ye have lien among the pots,
Like doves ye shall appear,
Whose wings with silver, and with gold
Whose feathers covered are."

"These must be fellow-sufferers," the one said to the other, and groping their way through the mire and darkness, they were guided by the sound to the spot where two others, fugitives like themselves, had found a refuge. The unlooked for meeting cheered their hearts. The darkness was their defence from the rage of man. And there, under the curtain of night, which fell around them like the folds of the tabernacle of God, while they held sweet counsel together, all sense of weariness and fear fled away, and they poured forth their hearts to God in praise and prayer the livelong night. There is a reality and glory in such worship, even in such a sanctuary, exceeding far that which depends on the meretricious aids of the long drawn aisles, the dim religious light, or the mercenary praise of the Cathedral choir.

In times of revival, when many have been newly awakened to spiritual life, and when the hearts of God's people have become more sensitive, there is special life and fervour in public worship. The social meeting becomes a necessity. With many hearts in one accord, there are

a multitude of gatherings to seek God's face. The service of praise is then no discordant drawl, nor yet any merely artistic performance, but it swells up full charged with the truest heart melody. A long past scene rises freshly to mind here. It was a summer's Sabbath day. A thunder shower the evening before had cooled the earth, and freshened all the foliage. The leaves, stirred by a light breeze, glanced and quivered in the sunlight. A soft haze clung to the forest, and loaded the air with fragrance. The little church, where we met to celebrate the Lord's Supper, was densely crowded: for the Lord had visited His people there, and had sent his heritage a "plenteous rain," A great burst of joyous praise rose aloft with the opening hymn. It had much of that character about it which is the result of deep spiritual feeling; the "melody of joy and health." When borne upwards on the wings of such praise, we recognize the unapproachable grandeur and beauty of the human voice as the instrument in this service. There is nothing more impressive than a multitude of hearts and voices, in one accord, singing the high praises of God. A very touching solemnity pervaded all the services, which, at times, became well nigh overpowering, demanding relief in tears; especially when, at some pause, a hymn broke forth in a full-hearted burst of harmony. There were many living hearts there, that day, which rose up on the wings of faith and love, and held high communion with the Living God.

It is well when the sanctuary where we worship is associated with such scenes as these. Places have their influence over us, as well as persons. The Lord Jesus speaks of "thy closet," as of some familiar and frequented place, to which we instinctively resort for communion with God. When Elijah came to Sarepta, and found the widow's son dead, he snatched the child from the weeping mother, and carried him "to the loft where he abode, and laid him on his own bed." When there, "he cried unto the Lord: O Lord, my God, let this child's soul come into him again."

He seemed to feel as if that "loft," where he had so often prayed before, was his best place for prayer now, when he seeks an unprecedented blessing.

The best consecration for any sanctuary or closet is the remembrance that you have met with God there, and the hope that there, as aforetime, you shall meet with him again. "Happy are you," says one, "if there be a house of prayer or a private dwelling which awaken in you, as you near it, a rush of holy feelings or happy recollections, a sanctuary round which a constant Sabbath shines, and a perpetual air of heaven reposes. And happy are you if, in your residence, there be a room, however sombre the stranger may think it, which you cannot enter without a secret comfort suffusing your spirit; a room where, in dreariest moments, you feel that you are not friendless, and in darkest days that you are not hopeless, a room in which memory has built its Peniels and Ebenezers, its memorials of ecstatic hours and answered petitions; a chamber which you abandon with regret when called to quit the dwelling, as if in leaving it you left the gate of heaven, the closet where you used to shut to the door and pray to your Father in secret, and feel that he was hearing you."

When we consider the separate acts of worship we can see how, to each one, the "spirit and truth" is essential. *Prayer*, when taken in the largest sense, includes adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and petition or supplication. Strictly, however, prayer consists in the last, that is, petition or supplication; and in this sense more especially though not exclusively, we consider it here.

Now, according to Scripture, it is not too strong language to use, when we say that the design of praying to God, is to *influence*, or *move* Him to give those things we ask. We are not careful here to follow all the vicious reasoning of men, who deify natural law, and deny the Lawgiver; who, in natural things, first lay down the maxim, and then hold to the faith of a blind mechanical necessity, excluding the Living God from all active or effi-

cient control. True, our prayers are not to inform God : we cannot tell Him anything about our case which He does not already know. Nor yet can our prayers alter any one of God's purposes. But with God's immutability in all His purposes, we also have this immutable property of His nature, that He is the hearer and answerer of prayer. While it is true, therefore, that his counsels change not, it is also true, that no small part of his purposes were formed in the foreknowledge of those prayers by which He had previously determined to be influenced, and which were regarded by him as the means by which his purposes were to be carried into effect. And thus our prayers are just as distinct and necessary a link in the chain of cause and effect, as any one of those paraded so exclusively by our men of natural science. There is, after all, no mystery or mysticism about prayer. It is just what it purports to be in the word of God, and its object is just what is there stated : viz., to induce, or to move God, who from eternity determined to be thus moved, to grant what the suppliant asks.

This opens up the whole field of reason and argument to the mind of the man who draws near to God in prayer ; and with what life and reality it induces this act of worship. A man can enter into the spirit of the words of Job, about "ordering his cause," before God, and "filling his mouth with arguments." It is the privilege of the true worshipper, with a heart-felt sincerity, humility, and urgency, to express those considerations, and bring forth those strong reasons, which in the view of a devout mind, may weigh as arguments wherefore he should obtain his requests. With such a spirit, all his petitions will be reasonable. He cannot hope for the fulfilment of an unreasonable prayer. Indeed neither to God nor man should we urge any request which it would not be proper to bestow. Such a request is a reproach to him who offers it, and an insult to Him to whom it is offered. But, just as in presenting a petition to a fellow-mortal we depend for

our success on the reasonableness of the request, and the good purposes it may serve, if granted ; so, in prayer to the only wise God, we have to regard the propriety of our request, and the strong reasons why it should be granted. No right argument can fail of its full force when presented at the throne of heavenly grace.

But all this implies *faith in God*. A man must have a simple faith in God—faith in His existence, faith in Him as the Living God, the hearer of prayer—before he can find it in his heart to pray. “He that cometh to God *must* believe that *He* is.” And more. He must believe that God is “a *rewarder* of them that diligently seek Him.” Faith in God—in His existence, and in His truth, that He is a covenant-keeping God, and shall most assuredly fulfil every word of promise He hath given—that faith is an essential element in true prayer.

In the prayers recorded in Scripture, how often does this faith stand out palpably, as their most special characteristic. The worshipper engages in the exercise with a deep sense of its reality. His cry is directed to no far off or unknown God ; but to One living, present, able to hear, and able to help. As, *e. g.* King Hezekiah has just received the boastful, blaspheming letter of the Assyrian, threatening him with the same doom which had overwhelmed all the nations he had conquered. The King takes the letter, goes up to the Temple, and there, first *spreading the letter out* before the Lord, sends up this cry—“Incline thine ear, O Jehovah, and hear; open thine eyes, O Jehovah, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he hath sent to reproach the Living God. Now, therefore, O Jehovah, our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art Jehovah, even Thou only.” It is all a simple reality. Hezekiah knew, and believed in, Him to whom he prayed. His cry is sent direct to one who could both hear and help him.

Again. Let us enter into a large room in a dwelling in

the City of Jerusalem. A considerable company is already assembled there. Two men enter, around whom they all eagerly gather, and overwhelm them with congratulations and enquiries. Peter and John have just come from the tribunal of the Sanhedrim. There they had been straitly threatened to speak no more in the name of Jesus. As they reported all that the priests and rulers had said, and described the deadly hostility they had manifested, all would feel they had reached a crisis. The great and mighty, those in worldly power and authority, were all now arrayed against *them*, a few weak, obscure men, and they must prepare to brave their utmost rage, or be unfaithful to their Lord. As this conviction grew upon their minds, doubtless a shade of deeper gravity fell on each face, but not one heart in all that company quailed. For, when they heard all, they lifted up their voice with one accord, and said—"Lord, Thou art God which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is, who by the mouth of Thy servant David, hast said: Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For, of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto Thy servants that, with all boldness, they may speak Thy word."

We hear the cry of faith in such words as these—faith in a Living God; faith in One who is nearer than the dreaded danger, and who is mightier than the mightiest foe. There is no doubt or darkness with regard to Him who is the hearer and answerer of prayer. In simple faith they realize His nearness, and flee to Him for refuge, With His presence as a protecting might, nothing can make their hearts quail.

Combined with faith, there is *sincere desire* of heart. Our petitions must be the simple expression of our hearts desire. This is opposed to all merely formal or mechanical worship. "When ye pray," are the words of the Lord Jesus, "use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye, therefore, like unto them." These empty repetitions, the sitting in the dust, or the prostration of the body, do not, in themselves, touch the essence of real prayer. They are just as widely astray who convert prayer into penance. It is a monstrous idea to change this priceless privilege, which can only be enjoyed as the free, spontaneous exercise of a believing heart, into a burden and punishment, degrading it to a mere mechanical duty, void of all real desire. This is indeed "the sacrifice of fools." It is not the living heart speaking in a living ear—the ear of the Living God. It degenerates into a mere form of words, expressing no real desire, and serving no real end.

True prayer is an exercise of the heart, the offering up of our desires unto God. He is a Living God, and, therefore, we must not mock Him with any dead form. We must come to Him with a true heart, presenting to Him its sincere and living desires. Essentially, prayer is a living heart in communion with the Living God.

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of the eye
When none but God is near."

It is the heart's exercise, when borne up on the wings of desire and faith to the presence-chamber of the Living God, our Father in Heaven.

There is "spirit and truth," an intense life and reality in true prayer. Dr. Chalmers used to remark of the prayers of Doddridge, that "they had an intensely *business-like* spirit." The author of the 'Still Hour,' says: "The feeling which will become spontaneous with a Christian,

under the influence of simple faith in God, and true heart's desire, is this—"I come to my devotions this morning on an errand of real life. This is no romance and no farce. I do not come here to go through a form of sound words. I have no hopeless desires to express. I have an object to gain. I have an end to accomplish. This is a *business* in which I am about to engage. Even my faltering voice is now heard in Heaven, and it is to put forth a power there, the results of which only God can know, and only eternity can develope. Therefore, O Lord, thy servant findeth it in his heart to pray this prayer unto Thee.'" A sense of God's presence, and the true heart's desire—a distinct aim in our prayer—will transform what is to many a drag and a duty, into the blessed privilege of intercourse and communion with the Highest.

Prayer naturally rises into PRAISE. Supplication gives place to Adoration, that is, the praise of the divine perfections; and to Thanksgiving, that is, praise for all that God has done for ourselves and others.

The heart is our best part. The affections are the noblest ingredient in our nature. For, "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love," How much—for our own elevation and happiness—must depend on placing these affections on the right object, and thus giving them freedom for their full and right exercise. Now, as one says, "the homestead of a finite spirit—much more the desolate chamber of a sinful heart—does not contain resources enough for its own blessedness." For our happiness, our affections must go *out* of self, to find objects on which they may be set; and for our elevation, they must go *up* to something higher, something nobler and holier than we. "Give ME thine heart," is God's entreaty. Obedience to that word of entreaty is the chief good, the "whole of man," the sum of our perfection and blessedness.

When the heart has been won over to God, when the

alienation and estrangement have been brought to an end; and when the soul has been opened to the perception of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, then it is tuned to the praise of adoration. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. I will extol Thee, my God, O King; and I will bless Thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless Thee, and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever." When the great reconciliation has been accomplished, when the soul is filled with wonder and gratitude for the riches of the divine mercy, and when the heart is gladdened with the divine grace, then, it cannot but overflow with the praise of thanksgiving. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

It is recorded of that devoted Christian, Joseph Alleine: "Love and joy and a heavenly mind were the internal part of his religion, and the large and fervent praises of God and thanksgiving for His mercies, especially for Christ, and the Spirit, and Heaven, were the external exercises of it. He was not negligent in confessing sin, but praise and thanksgiving were his natural strains; his longest, most frequent, and hearty services. He was no despiser of a broken heart, but he had attained the blessing of a healed and joyful heart." And this is the secret of true praise, "*a healed and joyful heart.*" The heart is out of tune until guilt is removed, and fear dispelled, and mercy obtained. But when we see the love of God in Christ, His unspeakable gift; when we become awake to the love of the great Redeemer, and can say in appropriating faith, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me;" and when an answering affection has been begotten in us, and we "love Him who first

loved us ;” then how irrepressible praise becomes. With what delight the saved soul, the living heart, can now hold this high communion with the Living God ; his God and Redeemer.

Some time ago, while privileged to assist a brother in a time of revival, one morning, while half awake, I heard a voice break out in a snatch of a hymn. These words were sung to a beautiful air :—

“ How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer’s ear,
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.”

A short silence was broken by another fragment in a bolder and more joyous strain :—

“ Awake, my soul, in joyful lays,
And sing the great Redeemer’s praise ;
He justly claims a song from me,
His loving-kindness, O how free.

I now recognized the voice of a girl in the manse. Again and again I heard the voice, now near, now distant, singing over all the house. Naturally fine, it had that morning a deep, rich, full-hearted melody, a suffusion of glad feeling, which rendered it peculiarly sweet—like the carol of a heart running over with some great joy. The refrain, “ His loving-kindness, His loving-kindness, O how free,” was given in a tone of indescribable thanksgiving and exultation. Some time after, while sitting in the study, my friend entered with marks of deep emotion on his countenance. To my enquiring look, he answered, speaking of this girl—“ She has found Christ.” The night before she had grace given her to receive and rest on Christ alone for salvation. Among other things which had much moved his heart, she used words like these :—“ Many a sleepless night I have spent in spiritual darkness and distress ; never, until last night, have I known what it was to spend a whole night awake from pure joy of heart.” All was now explained, Here was a soul filled with the first joy

of the great deliverance. One who had just reached that point of which David speaks—"The Lord heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, *even praise unto our God.*"

It is not the spell of faultless music that awakes the heart to true devotion. The most harmonious strains may be but discord in the ear of God. There is a "dayspring from on high" which visits the soul. Conscious now that the old death and darkness are past, cheered with the light of the new life, the soul is tuned to truest harmony, and the heart is running over with the melody of joy and health. "The winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come; and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." Have *you* ever known that blessed spring-time? Can *you* remember the first time when you could rest in the peace of the great reconciliation, and sing in the joy of the great deliverance? Only then can you offer up an acceptable sacrifice of praise; only *then*, when you have it in your heart to magnify the Lord for His grace to you, and when your soul has learned to rejoice in God, your Saviour.

In the *hearing* and *reading* of *God's word*, we must carry with us the same spirit—making these means whereby we are brought into communion and fellowship with God. Paul describes the very spirit of a true hearer, in this thanksgiving for the grace which had been bestowed on the Saints at Thessalonica:—"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men; but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe." Immediately before, he had used such words as these:—"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." How

plainly that tells of hearts in communion with the Living God, of hearers who could look beyond all merely outward human instrumentalities, and who, in the preaching of the Gospel, could hear the very voice of God, and listen to His own word.

And so with the *reading*. How many golden words of David flash on the mind here, showing his intense love for, and his delight in, those Scriptures which he possessed. "O how love I Thy law, it is my meditation all the day. I rejoiced in Thy word as one that hath found a great spoil. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." That intense love for the word of God, and that unspeakable delight in it, sprang from the same source. Through that word, as a means, David held communion with the Highest. And so shall we carry "spirit and truth" with us into the service, when our reading and hearing become means for bringing us into contact with the living God; when we hear *His* voice and listen to the gracious words which proceed out of *His* mouth.

Now, what a wretched thing mere formalism in worship is, and how hateful to the Blessed God! He notes it thus in high displeasure:—"Son of man, the children of thy people are still talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, 'Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord.' And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after covetousness."

What a mockery such a spirit makes of all the exercises of worship. You pay to God the compliment of the bended knee in the closet and family, or the uncovered head as you stand with his people in the sanctuary—with your mouth you show respect and love—but your heart, which God can see, goeth after covetousness. Even in the solemn act of worship, you give up your heart to all vain, worldly, and sinful imaginations. Is there not something frightful in such a spirit as this, actually carried with us into the act of God's worship? How can such worship be anything but an abomination to the most High God, the only holy One!

In the true idea of worship, the great fact of God's omniscience dominates over all. This fact carries encouragement to the heart of every sincere worshipper. He is glad to know that there is One to judge him, who *can* judge him without a shadow of misconstruction. One who can penetrate to the very secret of his motives, and scrutinize the inmost spring of all his words and deeds. In our approaches to God—more especially as petitioning at a throne of grace—how very often we can, only with great feebleness and imperfection, express the thoughts and desires of the heart. But, He can interpret all our stammering words; He can understand even the inarticulate desire, and send the wished for answer. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the Saints according to the will of God." It is also written: "God will fulfil *the desire* of them that fear them," as well as "hear their cry."

Now, is there no comfort in the thought that there is no possibility of our true desire and motive being either mistaken or unknown? To the worshipper with a true heart, the great fact of God's omniscience operates as a rich encouragement. The very thought and sense of it

has a re-assuring influence, producing hope and confidence. When we seek communion with God, when we present before Him our praise or supplications, it is for our interest that the very truth should be known; that there should be no room for misjudgment or misconstruction, and no concealment of anything within us. And thus it becomes our comfort and our joy—if we are indeed true worshippers—to know that “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

But it is not so with the man who draws near to God feignedly, and not with his whole heart. There is a terrible threatening in the fact of God’s omniscience to every one whose heart is not upright and sincere. The very thought of that searching eye must create doubt and misgiving, if there is anything in the heart to conceal. Under its perfect scrutiny, how can we dare to pretend to any feeling which does not really dwell in our heart? How can we dare to express any desire which is not our true heart’s-cry, before Him who is searching the heart through and through? How can we dare to approach His presence, attempting to lock up from his knowledge some inner chamber of the soul filled with vile thoughts, and polluted desires? O the folly of imagining that we can blind the glance of that all-seeing eye, or delude that dread omniscience! “He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall he not correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not He know?” What evil thought, what hidden desire, what insincerity, what secret pollution, what heart-iniquity of any sort, can be covered up from Him? How wretched the attempt, how sure of failure, how certain to bring you to shame! Consider this, as ye draw near to God, and see to it that your worship is the sacrifice of a true heart, and not the sacrifice of fools.

“GOD IS A SPIRIT, and they that worship Him MUST worship Him in SPIRIT and in TRUTH.”



CANADA

Presbyterian Church Pulpit.

BY REV. WILLIAM MCKENZIE,
ALMONTE.

"As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

THE DUTY AND ADVANTAGES OF DIVINE WORSHIP.

"**I**F there be a God, He ought surely to be worshipped. It is suitable that there should be an outward homage, significant of our inward regard. If God be worshipped, it is proper that some *time* should be set apart for that purpose, when all may worship Him harmoniously, and without interruption. One day in seven is certainly not too much, and I do not know that it is too little." The speaker was an American lawyer of eminence. He had been a sceptic in religion; but in reading the Bible, the perfection of the moral law staggered him in his unbelief in divine revelation. The question arose: Where could Moses get that law—a moral code so infinitely transcending all Greek and Roman wisdom and philosophy? He could

not believe it was the product of any unaided human mind, and felt shut up to the conclusion that it came from heaven. This was the dawn of a saving faith in his heart. The words given above were his significant comments on the fourth commandment.

God's ordinances are all worthy of Himself. They are holy. They are benignant to man, not arbitrary exactions of labour or homage. As a special and sacred *time* for the worship of God, "the Sabbath was made for man." Received and used as such, the Sabbath comes to man fully fraught with the richest blessing. For

A stated season of devotion is essential to our spiritual well-being. Let us once admit that we are moral agents, that we must all give an account to God, that we are to be blessed or wretched to all eternity, according to the use we make of our present privileges,—and it appears plain that, in these circumstances, a portion of our time should be set apart for God's service, and the preparation for eternity. If our only rule with respect to religion were that it might be attended to any time, the almost inevitable consequence would be, that it would be attended to at no time. The course of this world—its *drift*—is too strongly and fatally against all care for things unseen and eternal to allow of any other result. Time to seek the Lord!—were that left to the mercy of the world,—would receive no mercy. And it is a standing memorial of the grace of God, our Creator and Redeemer, "who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth," that he has, by his own sacred sanction, secured to us one day in seven for His worship. We must have such a time if we are to walk with God, and to learn His truth. We must have such a time, if we are not to be helplessly carried away by the influence of things seen and temporal. This stated season of worship is essential to our spiritual well-being.

The Sabbath also secures *time for all to worship God harmoniously*. A people wronged of their Sabbaths, and

bound down to an endless round of worldly toil, would soon lose all spiritual and exalted conceptions of God, and all godly fear and reverence would die out of their hearts. There is much in the social impulse to dispose the mind to worship ; much in the sympathy of numbers to help us in the exercise. Who could estimate the full worth of the Sabbath, not merely in its influence on our social well-being, but, as a day of public worship, in the cultivation of spiritual life.

When the historian D'Aubigné visited Britain, he was deeply impressed with the aspect of our Sabbaths, so different from all he had been accustomed to on the Continent. There, where it has not been engrossed by ordinary work or business, the Sabbath is degraded into a holiday, a time for mere secular recreation and pleasure. It has, in large measure, lost its character as the time for public worship. Even with all the shortcomings in Sabbath observance among us, the day had an aspect of solemnity and sacredness such as he had never seen in any other land, and he thus expresses his thoughts with respect to it : " I do not hesitate to say that this submission of a whole people to the law of God is something very impressive, and is probably the most incontestable source of the many blessings which have been showered on the nation. Order and obedience, morality and power, are all in Britain connected with the observance of the Sabbath. Amidst the activity which pervades all things, the bustle of the towns, and the energy with which the inhabitants pursue their earthly callings, what would become of them if they had not a day of rest in which to recruit themselves ; and laying aside things temporal, which are seen, to look forward to things eternal, which are unseen. Yes, no doubt, if a remedy is not found out for the evil, immorality and disorder will be brought in by these new roads. The old puritan habits are disappearing. This claims the earnest attention of the friends of religion and their country. We say again,

the severity of England as to the Lord's day and other institutions is, in our eyes, an essential feature of the national character, and an imperative condition of the greatness and prosperity of her people."

The Sabbath, as a time sacred to worship, *gives all an opportunity to learn God's truth*. With what divine beneficence it is thus adapted to the wants of men. Few men have leisure ; the great mass must always run the round of daily toil. Under its constant pressure what irresistible temptations would beset multitudes to neglect the acquisition of that knowledge which makes a man "wise unto salvation." But this day is the special time for the preaching of the word of life, and everything connected with it aids the effort. The cessation of business, the break in ordinary daily work, the tranquillity of the day, the welcome unwonted leisure, and the provision of the means of public instruction, not only afford the opportunity, but dispose the mind to attend to divine and eternal things. All can come, rich and poor, high and low, together, and wait on God's ordinance. How much this harmonious and universal worship must do to soften the asperities begotten by the inequalities of earthly condition. However men may differ with respect to station among themselves, all are on a level as the worshippers of the most High God, and as the hearers of His word. Were it not for the opportunity thus given to learn God's truth, how many myriads of our own countrymen even, would live and die in the darkness of ignorance ; with no hope beyond the grave, and no knowledge of that eternal life offered to us in Christ Jesus.

The Sabbath is a day for *worship, not for mere bodily rest or idleness*. However great its benefit as a day of rest from ordinary toil, and however needful as a restorative to our bodily frame, its special glory is the sacred character it bears. It is hardly possible to over-estimate the physical benefit of the weekly Sabbath ; but we should miss the great design wherefore it was "made for man,"

were we to look no farther. We make a great mistake if we treat ourselves as mere working machines, with no hope or interest beyond this present world, having no immortal soul to care for, no hell to flee from, no heaven to win. And think you that the blessed God has made this great mistake in setting apart a day for mere idleness? that He has cared for all your lower wants, those you have in common with the beasts that perish, and forgotten those which are infinitely more important? A Sabbath of idle rest or slumber may refresh the body, and get the machine into running gear for the work of the coming week ; but it is only a Sabbath sanctified, one of holy rest and worship, which meets the wants of man's nobler nature, and which, while it also recruits the body, leaves us wiser, better, and stronger men.

The Sabbath is a day for *worship*, not for *secular relaxation or amusement*. It is a foul degradation of the Sabbath to use it for such a purpose. Its beneficence as God's gift to man is made of none effect, and all its glory laid in the dust, when it becomes a day of mere worldly pleasure. Once, in the iron days of old, a book of Sunday Sports was sent down to Scotland, to be by military apostles forced on the observance of our countrymen. But how was it received? Then, as well as now, there were the timid and the time-serving, ready to yield to worldly power and authority. Then, as well as now, there were the careless and the ungodly, glad to trample upon God's day. But then also Scotland had sons who were sons indeed ; mighty men of valour, eagle-eyed and lion-hearted ; men who had wisdom to discern duty, faithfulness to follow her, and, if need be, heroism to die. These, unabashed by the world's sneer, and undismayed by the world's frown, were loyal to the law of their God. Sooner than violate the Sabbath, they went to the wilderness and spent it there.

“ In solitudes like these
Thy persecuted children, Scotia, foiled

A tyrant's and a bloody bigot's laws.
There, leaning on his spear,
The lyart veteran heard the word of God,
By Cameron thundered, or by Renwick poured
In gentle stream."

Their prayers and praises ascended to heaven from hill-side and glen, from moss and linn, mingling with the murmur of the mountain stream, and with the wild notes of the moorland bird. God saw and heard, and from his glorious throne on high He sent deliverance. With His blessing to them and their contendings we are indebted for our peaceful Sabbaths, and for that external reverence in which they are even now held. And shall we condemn that goodly heritage, and allow it to be trampled in the mire, at the bidding of men who have never known the charm of a sanctified Sabbath? Shall we tak as our chosen guides and teachers men who exhibit this broad brand of their degradation and debasement, that "they are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God?"

The Sabbath then is a *day for worship*. As the time, secured to us by God's own sanction, to seek His face and learn His truth, "the Sabbath was made for man." It is only in this character that the Sabbath can ever be preserved to men. It is the Lord's day. If it were our day, a day for mere bodily rest and secular amusement, how long would it resist the encroachments of covetousness? How long would business men, in their eager race of competition, respect it? A motion was once made in the House of Commons for raising and embodying the militia; and, for the purpose of saving time, it was proposed to exercise the men on the Sabbath. The resolution was actually about to pass, when an old gentleman on the back benches stood up and delivered this speech: "Mr. Speaker, I have one objection to make to this resolution: I believe in an old book called the Bible." He sat down. The members looked at one another, but none had the hardihood to press the matter, and the motion was dropped.

Remove the divine sanction from the Sabbath as *a day for worship*, and you destroy its only sure preservative. In some lands which bear the Christian name almost all trace of the Sabbath, as a day of rest even, is now gone. Its integrity as the Lord's day was first tampered with; then it fell to the level of a mere holiday; and then, by one encroachment after another, the world laid its grasp upon it; and now to tens of thousands in these lands it brings no break in the circle of bodily toil, no pause in the weary round of worldly work. Rejecting it as God's beneficent boon to man as an accountable and immortal being, they have lost it even as His gift for their temporal interest and advantage.

Only as a day of worship can we ever know the full blessing of God's Sabbath. In this aspect it comes invested in all its true beneficence as God's gift to man. The Sabbath was made for man as an heir of immortality. It is God's special day of audience; and he would thus remind us of our native dignity, and how that, even though we are now fallen from our high estate, we may yet become meet for His everlasting fellowship. It grieves the blessed God to see men carnalized, and, with all their immense capabilities, living and dying like the beasts that perish. And so He gives them His Sabbath to speak to them constantly of the long past time of innocence before man sinned, and to beget the longing in their heart for a return into the rest of God. He would not have us helplessly under this world's sway; so He puts His curb on covetousness, and on man's inhumanity to man. He breaks in upon the weary circle of worldly work and care and plants there His Sabbath, a type and a prophecy of a great inheritance, lost long since, but which yet may be regained.

“O day most calm, most bright,
The fruit of this, the next world's bud.
The couch of time; care's balm and bay;
The week were dark but for thy light;
Thy torch doth show the way.”

With respect to the *ordinances of public worship*, we find Archbishop Leighton saying : "The very life of religion doth much depend on the solemn c^{on}serva^{ti}on of the Sabbath. Consider but, if we should intermit the keeping of it for one year, to what a height profaneness would rise in those that fear not God, which are yet restrained, though not converted, by the preaching of the word and their outward partaking of public worship : yea, those that are most spiritual would find themselves losers by the intermission."

This puts the matter in a somewhat modified form. We are warranted to speak even more strongly and positively both of the *duty and advantages of public worship*—of public prayer and praise, and specially of the preaching of the gospel. For—

The *preaching of the gospel is God's chosen instrumentality for the salvation of men*. As it is written : "After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." As the instrument for the accomplishment of this great work, nothing ever will or ever can supersede the preacher of the gospel. The press can never supplant the pulpit. Public speaking, in its power, is in strict accordance with all the principles of our mental economy. There is a singular adaptation in the living voice, and in the mobile human countenance, to the work of impressing and instructing the souls of men, the chords of which are made to vibrate to the various modulations of the speaker's voice, and the various manifestations of his own emotion. It is in this manner, even from the first, that divine truth has been made known to men. Instead of being sent separate from all human accompaniments, the word of God came through the medium of prophets and holy men of God ; and at the last, most touchingly and powerfully of all, by "God manifest in the flesh," who spoke to us on earth in the form and with all the sympathies of a man. The same instrumentality

has been used, and in all ages it has been the most effective, for the propagation of Christianity. From the beginning the preaching of the word has approved itself a means divinely adapted to the work of reaching and moving the human heart, and saving the souls of men.

Doubtless we know that even on the solitary reading of the word, God has frequently granted the very highest blessing. Past history teems with instances of such a kind, where the solitary student, like Luther in the convent library, found in the written page the seed of eternal life. But we know also that God gives a special and saving influence to the living energy of the human voice. The man who speaks from the heart speaks to the heart. We know that the tones of earnestness and sincerity and feeling carry an emphasis and infection along with them. We know that there is an impression in the power of example, a charm in fervent piety, an authority in superior learning, a force and urgency in pathetic exhortation, a persuasion in affectionate entreaty, a constraining influence in the yearning anxiety of a man who beseeches you to care for the things which belong to your peace. These all are undoubted influences to assist and sustain the speaker; and the man who could combine all these in himself, and bring them to bear on the minds of any people in connection with great gospel verities, would, by God's blessing, make the preaching of the word a means of mightiest operation among men now, even as it has been in times past.

The Christian preacher, however, must come as the messenger of God to proclaim His gospel. He can only exert his full power when he keeps to the distinctively evangelical elements of Christianity, and their application to the individual soul. The church is not bound to watch over all the interests of social, literary, and political life. Let us leave something to other men and other professions. The preacher of the gospel can do far more to promote all these interests by indirect rather than by di-

rect efforts. "Whenever," says a thoughtful writer, "the ministry sink the cross, wholly or in part, in semi-religious themes, they are rewarded with nothing. They see, as the fruit of their labours, neither the conversion of individuals nor the prosperity of society. That unearthly sermonizing of Baxter and Howe, so abstracted from all the temporal and secular interests of men, so rigorously confined to human guilt and human redemption,—that preaching which, upon the face of it, does not seem even to recognize that man has any relations to this little ball of earth ; which takes him off the planet entirely, and contemplates him simply as a sinner in the presence of God,—that preaching, so destitute of all literary, scientific, economical and political elements and allusions, was, nevertheless, by *indirection*, one of the most fertile causes of the progress of Britain and America. Subtract it as one of the forces of English history, and the career of the Anglo-Saxon race would be like that of Italy and Spain."

The temptations are manifold, in these days, to introduce themes into the pulpit on which our Lord and His Apostles never preached. And if HE, "possessing an infinite intelligence, and capable of comprehending, in His intuition, the whole abyss of truth, physical and moral, natural religion and revealed, all art, all science, all beauty, and all grandeur,—if the Son of God, the omniscient One, was nevertheless reticent regarding the vast universe of truth which lay outside of the Christian scheme, and confined Himself to that range of ideas which relate to sin and redemption,—then who are we that we should venture beyond His limits, and counteract His example?" Let us dare to be true to our office, let us keep to our own peculiar message, and then the indispensable necessity of the pulpit shall be more clearly manifested, and its power far more deeply and widely felt. Nothing can ever supersede or supplant it when so used.

The *duty of waiting on the preaching of the word* is clear.

It is God's ordinance for the good of men, and no man can afford to neglect or despise it. It is great grace on the part of God to interpose on our behalf, and, when we could not help ourselves, to open up the way for our return to life. But it is a grace added to this when He appoints a ministry of reconciliation, when He sends men to plead with men, to offer, and to urge upon them as His messengers, the terms of peace. In the gospel ministry we have a divinely appointed means to bring about an agreement, a reconciliation, between God and sinful men—a ministry *not to recognise God to men*, but to *reconcile men to God*. For that ministry does not exercise the function of the priesthood in offering up a propitiatory sacrifice to God on behalf of sinners, like the priests under the old law, or as the priesthood of Rome impiously pretend in their idolatrous mass. This, Jesus Christ, our great high priest, did *once for all*, when, by the sacrifice of himself, He “made reconciliation for the sins of the people.” The gospel ministry exercises the function of the ambassador, to declare God's message, to convey His terms of peace, and to plead with men for their acceptance. Thus the Lord sends them forth with the word, “he that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me.” It is a simple folly in any man to make light of an ordinance of his maker. And how should this be received, and used, and valued, when it comes as the gift of God's grace?

It has been *through the preaching of the word that most men have been won over to a higher life*. We need not speak of those rare occasions—and why should they be so rare?—when the souls of a whole multitude have been moved by the voice of one man, as the trees of the forest are bent before the breeze; and when, as the result of one address, the seed of eternal life has been lodged in a hundred hearts. In the public worship of the sanctuary, on the preaching of the gospel from Sabbath to Sabbath, a divine and effectual blessing is constantly attending.

Without any outward show, the word of life has its course in the public assembly, beaming like the light into many a darkened heart, and falling like the dew on many a weary soul. It is a wretched thing when men who are the sport of earthly cares, and who have not yet found the resting place for their souls, imagine they have no time to frequent the assembly of God's house. What a pitiable lot where there is a *needs be* to neglect the merciful provision God has made for our highest good. If the call to worship should be heard by any class of men, if it should come gratefully to the ears of one more than another, that class should be our business men, on the stretch of eager competition, panting in the race for riches, weary and athirst amid all those perishable vanities which seek to possess, but cannot satisfy, their whole heart. Could an enemy desire them to be possessed by a more disastrous delusion than that which makes them imagine a necessity for the neglect of a means ordained by God for their salvation?

But even as most men have been won over to a higher life by this instrumentality, *so has it done the most to help men on in the divine life.* The man who has been taught of God will be the last to undervalue God's ordinance. The Sabbath services in the sanctuary, like weekly stepping stones, help him over many a difficulty and danger. He will remember how often that stated and seasonable time for worship came laden with spiritual refreshing; how often, when his mind was indisposed to consider things divine and eternal, when it had become sluggish to these by the benumbing effect of worldly work, that, by an obedience to the Sabbath bell, almost mechanical, he has come into God's sanctuary, and there found one whose office it was to bring the word of life into contact with his mind; and he will remember how often, before the power and urgency of the living voice, all the strongholds of indolence and corruption were by God's blessing thrown down, and he was forth re-strung for the daily conflict

against all evil, braced for renewed progress in the divine life.

"These are the days," says Dr. James Hamilton, "when the holiest feelings are created or increased, and when the most sacred joys come home. Like those brilliant dyes which our cold and watery atmosphere refuses to bring out, but which we are compelled to send away to purer skies and a less diluted sun, there are many devout emotions and divine affections which need a Sabbath atmosphere to give them their empyreal tone and heavenly hue ; and these have been the days when love to the Saviour and zeal for God, and goodwill to men, the most benevolent feelings and the most unworldly, have glowed to intensest lustre. And like those birds which sing among the branches, but which the roar of battle scares away, many of our sweetest joys take wing and quit the din of the daily battle ; but to the peace and quiet of these Sabbaths the startled happiness returns." Peace and joy and the assurance of hope are seldom more remote from a child of God than a Sabbath day's journey. And when the Comforter comes, and the believer is "in the Spirit on the Lord's day ;" when he realizes in heart the communion of saints in the great congregation, and enters with them into the audience chamber of the Most High, he comes out from that high communion with a countenance on which the radiance of the glory still lingers. God's ordinance of public worship has, in all ages, approved itself to be a means of mighty operation for "the perfecting of the saints," and "the edifying of the body of Christ."

We give an important testimony to the world on behalf of religion by the diligent attendance on the ordinances of God's house. How becoming and profitable it is when "the whole church comes together" on the Lord's day. Any sign of indifference on the part of those who profess to be Christ's ; frequent, or even occasional, needless absences, must act with a fatal effect on those who are care-

less and worldly. How they must be encouraged to despise the ordinance of God, to neglect the very instrumentality which it has pleased Him to appoint for their salvation, when they see any indifference on the part of professing believers. Now, not to speak of individual profit, there is here a special opportunity to benefit others by the influence of example. There are those who are earnest and diligent in this thing, with whom nothing but dire necessity prevails to make their place empty. They seem to enter into the spirit of him of old who said, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, the place where thine honour dwelleth." These are the men who profit most personally by the means of grace, and who, in a very important way, strengthen the hands of the gospel minister, and build up the church of God.

In whatever light we consider the matter, the duty and advantage of public worship are manifest. In the preaching of the gospel we have a means specially adapted to reach and move the human heart. In the assembly of the sanctuary there is the power of sympathy to awaken and sustain the heart in the various exercises of worship,—prayer, praise, and the hearing of the word. And besides personal profit, there is the power of our example over others, begetting the desire in them to partake of that which we so plainly value and enjoy. Let us honour the ordinance of God in every way competent to us, and then we shall increasingly experience its power to profit and bless. Let us see to it not only that nothing but plain necessity shall make our place *empty*, but that, *even as to the time*, we shall be there at the beginning, with quiet waiting hearts, prepared to worship in the beauty of holiness.

“Think when the bells do chime
'Tis angel's music, therefore come not late:
God then deals blessings.
Let vain or busy thoughts have there no part;
Bring not thy plough, thy plots, thy pleasures thither.
Christ purged His temple, so must thou thy heart,”

True religion, however, is the business of all times and places. A devout and practical sense of the presence of God *always*, is of the essence of true religion. With such a spirit a man will "walk with God," as Enoch did for three hundred years, before God took him. Now, to maintain this sense of the divine presence is one great purpose and design of all the ordinances of worship. Surrounded as we are by the objects of bodily sense, immersed in constant intercourse with men, and burdened with a host of worldly cares, how needful is the Sabbath, with all its special occupations and opportunities to seek and serve the Lord, to keep us habitually alive to the sense of His presence. With what difficulty, but for that day, would even the renewed heart maintain a right sense of its relations to God, and dependence upon Him.

At the height of his fame, Wilberforce was one of the busiest of men. It seemed a marvel how any one man could bear the mental strain demanded by his position as a leader in Parliament, and in so many schemes of philanthropy; not to speak of his immense correspondence. It was a greater marvel still how he could maintain his high-toned spirituality as a Christian. The main secret was his sanctified Sabbaths. He declared that to him they were "invaluable." "What a blessed day," he says, "is the Sabbath, which allows a precious interval wherein to pause, to come out from the thickets of worldly concerns, and give ourselves up to heavenly and spiritual objects. Observation and my own experience have convinced me that there is a special blessing on the right employment of these intervals. O what a blessing is Sunday, interposed between the waves of worldly business, like the divine path of the Israelites through Jordan." The exercises of the Sabbath brought to Wilberforce both mental invigoration and spiritual life.

But even with all the help of one day in seven devoted specially to the worship of God, how soon the impressions of the Sabbath are effaced by the friction of the week, and

how soon we yield to the drift of secularity. There has been thus, at all times, a felt need for carrying on the *exercises of social worship through the week*. The advantage of so doing has been widely felt and acknowledged. The exercises of private devotion and family worship do not supersede the use and advantage of the social meeting. There is nothing which speaks more clearly to all men of religion as an every-day concern. "I like," says J. Angell James, "to hear the bell tolling for worship on a week-day; it seems to say 'serve the Lord at all times.' I love to see the people of God come cheerfully, gravely, devoutly, and earnestly; wending their way through the busy and thoughtless crowd to the house of prayer, saying in effect to the multitude around them, 'come with us and we will do thee good.' I love to see the portals of the sanctuary opened of a week evening, which, while the doors of the theatre, the ball-room, and the tavern, are drawing the lovers of pleasure, shall send forth the voice of wisdom, saying, 'How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.'"

It is true we have no express command given with respect to the week-day meeting. It is rather the growth of the Christian instinct, the expression of the Christian consciousness; an instinct most clearly exhibited, and a consciousness most imperatively demanding expression, in times of the greatest spiritual life. In the first days of the gospel, those days of fervent love, and earnest labour, those days of marvellous devotedness and success, we read of the disciples "continuing *daily, with one accord*, in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house." Or, "*daily* in the temple and in every house, ceasing not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ." And just as it was then, *so now*, whenever the church is favoured with an approach to Pentecostal times of blessing, the craving of

the heart of the quickened and revived church demands the old week-day meeting, either in the sanctuary of God, or from house to house.

These gatherings are sanctioned by the Lord's promise. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." How such words as these hallow the quiet meeting of the disciples of Christ. What expectations they create of blessing and refreshing when we find it in our heart to come together in his name. How they suggest the week-night meeting for His worship, and for fellowship with one another. The gospel precept, "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is," surely applies to these gatherings. What even though we have no express rule for them in the word of God, are they not an added blessing, an added means of grace, whereby we may be more fully furnished to serve and glorify our Lord?

To object to the week-day meeting, to doubt its obligation, because not expressly commanded, "demonstrates," say one, "a low standard of piety; as if every step beyond the measured way were unwillingly trodden. Such language, fairly interpreted, is like saying—I cannot find it in my heart to serve God beyond a given point, that ascertained, all the rest is my own." Who does not feel in a moment that this could never be the utterance of a Christian heart, at a time when it was filled with the joy of the Lord, and made glad with his grace? The week-night meeting becomes thus a most sensitive test of the condition of the church. Where there are many longing after God, or living in his favour, how gladly will the hour rescued from the world's week be enjoyed as a time of refreshing communion with God, and with His people.

The week-night social meeting helps to perpetuate the impressions of the Sabbath. How refreshing the weekly respite from ordinary worldly work proves to many. How easy it is to maintain a devotional frame of mind while

forming one of the great congregation, while borne aloft on the swell of praise, or joining in the common prayer. And how often, when the fervent words of the preacher have been carried to the heart by the spirit of God, we feel awake and strong, and fit for any conflict. The whole circumstances of the day, and all its peculiar occupations, beget and maintain that frame of mind which we desire habitually to possess. But, as the Sabbath closes, we think with a sigh on the coming day, when, the short respite over, the world with all its attendant cares shall again claim our heart and thoughts. We know too well from past experience the power this has to dissipate our impressions, and to deaden our hearts to the sense of spiritual and eternal things. Too often we fight a losing battle with importunate cares, and even more importunate follies. A single hour redeemed from their sway, and devoted to social worship, can go far to break the spell, and set the spirit free. How salutary to revive impressions, to recall our resolutions, and to feel the power of sympathy in communion with God's people, in the very midst of that current of secularity which strives to sweep us helplessly away. And what can do this more effectually than the revival of the Sabbath feeling as we meet and worship with those with whom we met and worshipped in the sanctuary?

The week-night meeting *tends to check the growth of worldly-mindedness*. "Necessarily occupied through the day, and from day to day, in attention to earthly things; with not only the hands full, but the heart too, of worldly business; with the mind kept on the full stretch on the subject of profit and loss; and thus led, almost without choice or design, to form an over-estimate of the importance of such matters, till the soul of the professor resembles his shop, and is rull of the din, and solicitude, and eagerness of trade,—how healthful, and admonitory, to quit for an hour in the evening this busy scene to look at other objects, to engage in other pursuits, and to call up

other feelings, and those, all of a holy, heavenly, and eternal nature." The very break in upon engrossing worldly work, the one evening's check to the secular drift, can do much to preserve the heart from the hardness of mere worldly-mindedness, and abate the absorbing power of things seen and temporal. Of those who are really alive unto God, how few there are who cannot look back on the week-night meeting as a source of real blessing. It was a reminder, recalling them to thoughts and purposes they were about to let slip; a refreshment giving them new heart and strength to serve the Lord, and deny all ungodliness. The world is at war with our highest interests, and it assails the soul both by deceit and violence. The world's aim is to fill the whole heart, and make it blind to unseen and eternal things. But to frequent the house of God, to break in on worldly avocations by oft-repeated visits thither, to come together with His people when they meet in His name, is one sure method of dis-entangling the perplexed spirit.

The week-night meeting *elevates the tone of piety*. Religion is not confined to times and places, to the closet and the sanctuary. Religion is a life, to be maintained everywhere, and which must accompany us to the office and the market-place. A Christian man, alive to his responsibilities, will shew an upright, minute, and generous morality towards his fellow-men. But he will not only be the *man of honour* to them, he will be the *man of devotion* and spirituality towards God. Even in the midst of all his worldly work, his heart will point Godward and heavenward. His citizenship is in heaven. This is the true ideal of a godly life, and one which it is in the heart of a Christian man to exemplify. But we cannot rise to the height of this attainment without care and diligence, and the full use of all those means of profit which are afforded to us. The week-night meeting is one of these. And just as the week-evening service is the product of the Christian consciousness when most alive, and most fully

under the power of eternal things, so can it, in a most effective way, beget that thoroughly awakened consciousness, and keep it sensitive, and thus retain the soul under the powers of the world to come.

Once more ; our attendance on the week-night meeting, is a *help and encouragement to many others*. What heart it gives to the *minister*, to see such a spirit among his people. To see them esteem his work so highly, and to be so open to the power of spiritual things, as to sacrifice their ease after a day of toil, or to give up the pleasures of ordinary social intercourse, in order to be present at the prayer meeting. This tightens the bond between a minister and his people, and benefits both.

How *many others* may be open to the influence of your example. If they see how you value the meeting, by the sacrifice of time which you cannot well spare, and if they can observe its effect upon your own spirit, may they not reason that what you so value and enjoy, may also be good for them ; and thus they may be drawn within reach of those means which may awaken them to a new and higher life. And what may be the force of your example on your fellow-members in the church ? How many business men, professing Christians, would smile at the idea of declining or deferring a business engagement, for the sake of attending a prayer meeting. But why should this be so ? Might not business be arranged so as not to interfere with the meeting ? Is business to have the first place without dispute all the week through ? Might not something be sacrificed for the sake of higher good ? Were you to act in this spirit, might not your example speak with a trumpet tongue to some neighbour with whom you are familiar on the exchange ?

And then what a proof to *ungodly men* of the power of religion, and of our own earnestness about it, would be given by "the whole church coming together" on a week-night. What an admonition that would be to the careless multitude, wholly given up to the pursuit of this

world's profits or pleasures; to those who grudge even the Sabbath to the exercises of worship, who say in their hearts "what a weariness it is; when will it be over, that we may buy and sell, and get gain?" What an impressive voice does a large congregation, assembled on a week-day evening for God's worship, send forth to the neighbourhood in which it is found, crying aloud—"Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Let us encourage the habit, and the liking, for all the exercises of social worship, remembering the promise that *He will meet with us there*, He, in whose presence there is fulness of joy. Let us more than ever, "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

THE FAMILY, how fruitful of topics that word comes. How many sweet associations are identified with the home of our childhood. How many hallowed memories are bound up with the worship of God there; and how many undying influences have had their birth in the services of that little sanctuary.

The Family is a divine institution. It was the first, if we except the Sabbath, which was ordained by God for the training and education of men. By the divine constitution of our nature we are social beings; and a very large portion of our earthly happiness depends on the exercise, the *outgoing*, of our affections. We must have objects to care for, and to love. We must have those upon whom we can expend the wealth of our hearts, and from whom we can obtain a return in kind. And thus "God hath set the solitary in families," and established human society on the foundation of the mutual helpful affection of husbands and wives, parents and children, gathered in

households, and having a community of interests, common joys and sorrows, common hopes and fears.

But though the Family has thus been divinely instituted as the basis and source of earthly well-being, it does not follow that *home* and *happiness* are invariably kindred terms; nor yet, that because the household is gathered under one roof, therefore it is the abode of unity and love, of purity and peace. There is a broad and terrible distinction indicated in that word of Scripture; "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but He blesseth the habitation of the just." Here, as in all other earthly things, sin mars the beneficent design of the Creator, and puts its defacing stamp on that which he made "very good." There are many households on the earth Godless, Christless, prayerless, and unblessed. There are too many where God is neither honoured nor acknowledged; where there is no family altar, where they call not on His name—too many where parents and children alike are strangers to the precious faith, and to the glorious hope of the blessed gospel. Yet even in such households, we see the exercise of the natural affections, the love of parents and children. But, in an atmosphere darkened by ungodliness and sin, there is much to injure, and even destroy, these affections. They are not surrounded by a kindly air. The unrenewed heart is not a genial soil even for their growth. They flourish there like the flowers of a neglected garden, and the native weeds of selfishness and sin continually strive to rush up and choke them.

It is only in a thoroughly Christian family that we can see the realization of what a home should be. The eye of a covenant God rests on that household. He spreads His covering wings over it by night and by day. Whatever may be its outward aspect,—be it the home of lordly wealth or lowly poverty,—yet "the habitation of the just is blessed." All its inmates are precious in the sight of the Most High. They live in the light of His favour, they are

enriched with His blessing, and His spirit is their guide and comforter. He is always with them in trouble ; He hears their sighs, and He sees their tears, and He is their stay and their deliverer. No earthly power can shut out the blessed God from a Christian home, nor intercept the light of His face ; and all that the world can give is not equal to that felicity which His gracious presence sheds abroad. "The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself. There be many that say, who will shew us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep ; for thou Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety."

Family Worship is a duty which results plainly from our relations to God, and to one another. We find our warrant for it not so much in the explicit injunctions of Scripture, as in its connection with God's glory, and our own well-being. We find it in the divine promises to those families who seek God's face, and in the divine denunciations against those who "call not on His name." We find it in the example of families recorded in Scripture with God's approval: "I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." "As for me and my house," was the resolution of Joshua, "we will serve the Lord."

Is not united worship the only way in which a *family, as such*, can glorify and serve God? Are our households to be utterly Godless, to present an appearance of mere atheism, with no altar, and no sacrifice for God, and no priest to serve Him "in whom we live, and move, and have our being?" The inspired prophet cries: "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on Thy name." A prayerless family is a mark for the arrows of Almighty God. A house silent towards God in praise and prayer is more

like a sepulchre of dead souls, than a habitation of living ones. All the adornments of wealth and taste in a Godless household, are like the garnishings of a tomb.

The duty of family worship commends itself even to the natural conscience. The very heathen rise up to judge and condemn prayerless Christian households. For, in all lands, besides the national gods, we find their *penates*, their family deities, which they seek to propitiate and consult in every matter of household interest and importance. And are those families alone to be silent, to be without household worship, to whom the knowledge of the "one only living and true God," our Father in heaven, has been sent?

But family worship is a *special means of grace and blessing*. In all its parts;—and we can ill afford to lose or neglect even one of them—in the praise for God's mercies, in the devout reading of His word, and in the prayer for His blessing, what a combination of salutary influence is brought to bear on every heart. By this solemn exercise, the family, as such, express their dependence on God, their adoration of his perfections, and their obligations to His grace. It becomes the channel through which their wants are supplied, and the communications of divine grace sent. When maintained, not in mere form, but in spirit and truth, family worship is, and always has been, the stay and support of domestic harmony and domestic holiness.

It is a means of grace to parents. This ever-recurring exercise in his own family, tends to keep the heart alive to a deep sense of the importance of personal godliness. It forms a constraining motive to Christian consistency, when any one considers, that he thus places himself so conspicuously and constantly before his family as a religious man. And when the exercise is sustained by a consistent life, how it tends to exalt a man in the estimation of all under his roof, and invest his character with a new sacredness. The reverence acquired by a parent as the

priest of his household, disposes all to submission to his authority, and to give him the obedience of love. In all his family cares and troubles, his heart is strengthened by the remembrance that he has sought for every member the shelter of the Almighty's wing, committing them to His keeping; and made them the witnesses, and sharers in, this act of surrender. Above all, he can look for that blessing, which "maketh rich," in answer to his prayers, and hope for the sunshine of God's favour in his home. Adversity throws its darkest shadow over the prayerless homestead; and even prosperity may enter there only as a golden curse. But "happy is he who hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God."

Family worship has a *healthful influence on all the household*. It is a perpetual protest against forgetfulness of God, a standing means of grace, enforcing continually, on every heart, God's claims on their gratitude and love. In the regular reading of the word they are kept constantly under instruction, within the reach of God's voice, and the power of the world to come; kept, as it were, within sight of the throne of God, and the cross of Christ. The very exercise is the expression of solicitude for the welfare of their soul, of the desire for their salvation; and suggests their own individual need to seek God, and the danger of neglecting the great salvation. How often, in times past, has it been blessed to the conversion of children and domestics. A Christian parent may look for the very highest results on the right use of this means of grace. A nobler history is often enacted under many a lowly roof than that which is blazoned in the records of nations. The most splendid earthly event is immeasurably surpassed in far-reaching issues, in real interest and glory, by the new birth of a soul from above; by a son or a daughter turned unto righteousness at the family hearth, given as a reward to a parents believing labours, and believing prayers. The Christian household is the nursery of the Church of Christ.

The exercise may become a special *means of blessing to visitors in the household*. A few years ago an English gentleman visited a friend in America. He was a man of talent and accomplishments, but an infidel. His friend was a Christian. He invited the stranger to make his house his home. On the evening of his arrival, before the usual hour for retiring, knowing his sentiments, his host informed him that the time had come for family worship, and that he should be happy to have him remain and unite with them, or, if he so desired, he could retire. He readily consented to remain, and took part in the exercise. He left in a few days. Some four years after he returned to the same house ; but how changed. He was now a humble-minded, earnest Christian man. And in the course of that evening's conversation he told how that, on the first evening of his former visit, when he knelt with them in family prayer, it was the first time for many years that he had bowed the knee to his Maker. The act brought back such a crowd of memories, it so vividly reminded him of a father's prayers, and of such scenes in his father's house, that the tide of emotion carried him completely away. He did not hear a word of the prayer then uttered. The occurrence made him think ; and his thoughtfulness resulted in his seeking and finding a quiet rest in Christ Jesus, and in the redemption wrought out by Him. His parents had long gone to their eternal rest, but their long past prayers, not only *for* but *with* their son, had left an influence behind which could not die.

The family altar is the source of untold blessing. It hallows the domestic hearth, and imparts to all its social intercourse one of the purest and most ennobling ingredients. With a divine and salutary influence it acts on every member of the household, and may come charged with the highest blessing even to the stranger within the gate. But a prayerless family is a dreary spectacle. Destitute of the family altar, a house is like a scene in the desert, where no living fountain clothes the arid ground with forms of beauty, and no fragrance enriches the air. The simple act of

erecting that altar is often the beginning of a moral transformation, more marked and desirable, than that brought about in the natural world by the opening of "streams in the desert." There is a quaint illustrative anecdote recorded of the Rev. John Ryland, of Northampton.

While on a journey, he was overtaken by a violent storm, and compelled to seek shelter in the first inn he came to. The people of the house treated him with great kindness and hospitality. They would fain have showed him into the parlour, but being very wet and cold, he begged permission rather to take a seat by the fire-side with the family. The good old man was friendly, cheerful and entertaining; they all supped together, and residents and guest seemed mutually pleased with each other.

At length, when the house cleared, and the hour of rest approached, the stranger appeared uneasy, and looked up every time a door opened, as if expecting the appearance of something essential to his comfort. His host informed him that his chamber was prepared whenever he chose to retire.

"But," said he, "you have not had your family together."

"Had my family together!" said the landlord. "For what purpose? I do not know what you mean."

"To read the Scriptures, and to pray with them," replied the guest. "Surely you do not retire to rest in the omission of so necessary a duty?"

The landlord confessed that he had never thought of doing such a thing.

"Then, Sir," said Mr. Ryland, "I must beg you to order my horse immediately."

The landlord and family entreated him not to expose himself to the inclemency of the weather at that late hour of the night, observing that the storm was as violent as when he first came in.

"May be so," he replied. "But I had rather brave the storm than venture to sleep in a house where there is

no prayer. Who can tell what may befall us before morning? No, Sir, I dare not stay."

The landlord still remonstrated; and expressing great regret that he should offend so agreeable a gentleman, at last said he should have no objection to "call his family together." But he should not know what to do with them when they came.

Mr. Ryland then proposed to conduct family worship, to which all readily consented. The family was immediately assembled, and Mr. Ryland called for a Bible; but no such book could be produced. However, he was himself enabled to supply the deficiency, as he always carried one with him. He read a portion of Scripture, and then prayed with much fervour and solemnity, acknowledging, in a very special manner, the preserving goodness of God that none present had been struck dead by the storm, and imploring protection through the night. He prayed earnestly that the attention of all might be awakened to the things belonging to their everlasting peace, and that the family might never again meet in the morning, or separate at night, without prayer.

When he rose from his knees almost every one present was bathed in tears; and the inquiry was awakened in several hearts,—“Sir, what must I do to be saved?” Much interesting and profitable conversation ensued.

The following morning Mr. Ryland again conducted family worship; and he obtained from the landlord, a promise that, however feebly performed, the exercise should not in future be omitted. This day proved indeed the beginning of days to that family. Most, if not all of them, became decided and devoted followers of the Lord Jesus Christ; and were the means of diffusing a knowledge of the gospel in a neighbourhood which had before been proverbially dark and destitute.

It is but a hapless family where there is no sense or acknowledgement of dependence upon God, and no desire to be under His loving care. That divine protection

is its defence and glory. When Satan accused Job before God, he said, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" That invisible fence had been the shield of Job and his family, and had oftentimes driven back his unseen but cruel foe, fretted and foiled. And so, in the midst of a thousand lurking dangers, the Lord surrounds His own with His tender and Almighty care. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth even for ever." Does that household not lack a special felicity which remains outside the shadow of God's Almighty wing?

Now, what is all the gilded insecurity of a godless home of wealth, with all the accessories of taste and refinement, compared with the lot of the humblest home on earth, safe under that shelter? Our very earthly comforts lose their most peculiar charm, when they are not recognised as coming to us from the hand of Him "who giveth us life, and breath, and all things. And hence the beauty and significance of another exercise of family religion, in *the devout supplication of God's blessing* on all our mercies, and the fervent thanksgiving for them as His gifts. Every earthly comfort thus becomes a link of connection between us and our Maker. Every one is an evidence of his constant care. Surrounded with them on every hand, and having them continued from day to day, inspires the soul with an adoring gratitude. The heart responds to the words of God's servant of old—"Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, *and Thy thoughts which are to us-ward*; they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." It is in such a spirit of grateful praise to God for all his numberless mercies, that we learn "to eat our meat with gladness and singleness of heart."

It is sad to think that in so many homes,—homes even

of luxury and refinement, where there is so much to beget and sustain this glad and grateful feeling,—no connection between God, the giver of all good, and the many mercies enjoyed, is either felt or acknowledged. In the time of Dr. Payson, a lawyer in Portland, who ranked among the first in the city for wealth and cultivation, was reluctantly induced, on his wife's entreaty, to invite the minister to his house. He had been accustomed to associate experimental religion with meanness, and felt, or affected, great contempt of Mr. Payson. He knew by report something of his practice in visiting, and dreaded to have his house made the scene of a gloomy religious service. He consented to the visit with the positive determination that Mr. Payson should not be allowed to converse on religion, nor ask a blessing upon his food, nor offer up a prayer in his house.

The evening came. He received his guests courteously. He exerted all his powers of conversation, which were great, to forestall the divine, and prevent the obtrusion of the topics he disliked. Mr. Payson began to be aware of the design, and for a time it seemed hard to say who would overcome. The trying moment, which was to turn the scale, arrived. The domestic entered with tea. The master of the house became more animated and eloquent, resolved so to engross the conversation, as to hear no question, and allow no interval for "grace," giving no indication by hand, eye, or lip, that he either expected or desired such a service. Just as the distribution was on the very point of commencing, Mr. Payson interposed the question—"What writer has said 'the devil invented the fashion of carrying round tea, to prevent a blessing being asked?'" Our host felt himself "cornered," but, making a virtue of necessity, he promptly replied: "I don't know what writer it is; but, if you please, we will foil the devil this time; will you ask a blessing?" He brooked the defeat as well as he could, still resolving not to sustain another by allowing the offering of thanks. But here too,

by the exercise of admirable tact on the part of his guest, he was disappointed, and led himself to request the service. He still continued the contest, but Mr. Payson sustained his character as a minister, and gained every point, though all in a way so natural and unconstrained, and with such respectful deference to his host, that the latter could not be displeased, except with himself.

Mr. Payson not only acknowledged God on the reception of food, but he conducted family worship by reading the Scriptures and prayer, before leaving; and all this too, at the request of the master of the house; though the request, in every successive instance, was made in violation of a fixed purpose. The chagrin of the defeat, however, eventually resulted in the greatest joy. His mind, thereafter, was never entirely at ease, until he found peace in believing. Often did he revert, with devout thankfulness to God, to the visit which had occasioned his mortification; and he came to regard with a loving veneration the servant of God he had once despised.

Of course, the perfunctory "grace," of a few hastily muttered words, which few can hear or follow, is not that exercise of family religion of which we speak. It is a question whether that ceremony might not profitably be dispensed with. What we speak of is a distinct and hearty acknowledgment of the Divine goodness in the gift of every mercy, and an ascription of thanks for his unwearied bounty. There is a deep significance in such an exercise. It adds a charm to every comfort, and guards against their misuse. It is then a most reasonable service, commending itself to all.

The missionary Consul, Pritchard, tells of a severe, though unintentional, rebuke, administered by a few South Sea Islanders, won from heathenism, to a company of educated Christian gentlemen. He was invited, with Queen Pomare, and several chiefs, to dine on board an English man-of-war. A large table was prepared on the quarter deck. All being seated, the dishes were supplied

with the choicest fare, but not one of the "natives" attempted to eat. The Captain, surprised and distressed, turned to Mr. Pritchard, and said, "I fear we have not provided such food as the natives like : I don't see one of them begin to eat." He replied, "You could not have provided anything they would like better ; the reason why they do not commence eating is simply this, they are accustomed always to ask a blessing." Before we could say anything more, the Captain, evidently feeling confused, said—"I beg your pardon, Mr. Pritchard : please say grace." He immediately "said grace," when the natives soon gave proof that they liked the food provided. All seemed to feel the unintentional rebuke, and it was well taken, though 'twas a pity that a company of Christian gentlemen should have been open to such a rebuke, and from such a quarter.

When shall "holiness to the Lord," be the insignia on every household which bears the Christian name? Sir Walter Scott, sometimes of an evening, led his guests to an arbour on his lawn, that they might hear the distant music of a sacred tune. It was the family worship of the godly tenants of a cottage, and the swell of the Psalm fell touchingly on the ear of the great minstrel himself. There was sentiment, and romance, in the far off cadence of a covenanting melody ; but, alas ! why did his own noble hall not resound to God's high praise in more faultless strains? How godliness adorns a household. The spell of its beauty touched the poetic and susceptible heart of Robert Burns ; and, with the home of his youth for the original, he has left behind a picture of domestic piety and happiness which promises to endure as long as the language in which it has been portrayed.

But when shall we see all our households adorned with the "beauty of holiness?" The time is not yet when there is an altar for God's worship in every Christian home, and where all its comforts and mercies are held sacred as gifts from God's hand. Our families are not all nurseries of

the Church of Christ. At many a family hearth lessons, sadly different from the love of God, and trust in Christ, are ingrained on the hearts which are yet tender. How many households in our land of gospel light, are darkened by ungodliness; how few irradiated and made glad with the sunshine of God's smile. How many silent towards God in praise and prayer; how few made vocal with the melody of joy and health.

Is the worship of God not a great *privilege*? It is liberty of access to the Most High; liberty to pour into the ear of Divine sympathy every sorrow, liberty to consult with Divine wisdom in every difficulty, liberty to seek from Divine resources the supply of every want. Is that worship not a high *honour*? It is admission into the audience chamber of Him who alone is great; it is intercourse with Him who is the fountain of life and glory. Well may our hearts respond joyfully to the words spoken of old, "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts." When worship here becomes the foretaste and earnest of the fellowship of eternity; when, by all its ordinances here, we are being made meet for the endless service of the courts above; then, worship is an exalted privilege. It is then, that, in all its exercises here, we seem to get a glimpse of the place, and time, of which it is written, "And I saw no Temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the Temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it." Blessed is the man who shall find a place within the circle of that glorious Light, and whose heart shall be attuned to the *everlasting worship* of that Temple.



CANADA

Presbyterian Church Pulpit.

BY REV. J. M. GIBSON, M. A.

ERSKINE CHURCH, MONTREAL.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM.

“HE Gospel of the Kingdom—” is this a proper designation of that which we are accustomed in brief to call “the Gospel?” A moment’s consideration will show that the expression, “the Gospel,” is elliptical. It simply means the good news, and suggests the question as to what is the substance of the good news. Does it then convey a correct idea of the substance of the Gospel to designate it “The Gospel of the Kingdom?” So it would seem, if the Scriptures be our guide. To determine the question, we turn naturally to the first use in Scripture of the term Gospel, where, if anywhere, we may expect the ellipsis to be supplied; and we find it first in this sentence of Matthew: “Jesus went about preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom.” In the first chapter of Mark in the same way, we are told that “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.” The testimony of Luke is in entire agreement with these.

His first use of the word Gospel, indeed, is in a quotation from Isaiah, which formed the subject of the first discourse of Jesus which he records; but we have not to read far before we find what idea Luke had concerning this Gospel, which Jesus claimed that he was anointed to preach, for he presently reports our Lord as saying: "I must preach the Kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent." This then is the first impression which is given us of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that it is essentially and specially a Gospel of a Kingdom, "the Gospel of the Kingdom." And all attentive readers of the Evangelists above quoted know that this impression is kept up throughout their several Gospels. It may be said, in general, that these three Gospels, from beginning to end, are about a kingdom which Matthew generally calls "the Kingdom of Heaven," and which Mark and Luke uniformly call "the Kingdom of God." In the Gospel according to John, a similar prominence is given to the Kingdom in the conversation with Nicodemus at the beginning, and with Pilate at the end, which is enough of itself, apart from what we gather from the other Evangelists, to make it evident that the Life, which seems to be the leading idea throughout, is Life in the Kingdom, the good news of which the Lord Jesus had come to proclaim.

The same impression, concerning the essence and substance of the Gospel, is kept up in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. In the opening sentence, we are told that, during the forty days which elapsed between His resurrection and ascension, Jesus continued "speaking to his disciples of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." It is the Gospel of the Kingdom which the Apostle Peter preaches to the assembled multitudes on the day of Pentecost, in that great sermon of which this is a summary: Jesus, of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, is now seated on the Throne of David, and these wonders of the Spirit, which you see, are manifestations of His royal power. And so with the subsequent testimony

of all the Apostles, of which we find the most summary statement in the answer of the Twelve, when questioned before the Sanhedrim : "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hanged on a tree : Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." And at the very close of the book we are told that the Apostle Paul continued in his own hired house at Rome, "preaching the Kingdom of God to all that came in unto him."

In the Epistles, while the elliptical phrase, "the Gospel," has, from long and familiar use, taken the place of the fuller designation which was needed for the sake of clearness at the beginning of the announcement of the glad tidings, yet there is quite enough in the general scope of these letters, as well as in the specific terms of very many special passages in them, to make it evident that the Gospel of which they treat is the Gospel of the Kingdom still. As for the Apocalypse, it is a Revelation *from* the Throne, as is set forth in the introduction in the first chapter ; and it is a Revelation *of* the Throne ; for this is the centre of all the visions : "Behold a Throne was set in Heaven, and One sat on the Throne." Thus do we find the impression produced in the opening of the New Testament kept up consistently to the very close, so that it is abundantly evident that the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the Gospel of a Kingdom, the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Is this fact sufficiently recognized in our day ? Do we Christians of the present day give that prominence to the Kingdom, in our thoughts and words, which is given to it in our original documents ? Is the Gospel of Jesus Christ habitually viewed as "the Gospel of the Kingdom ?" Would not "the Gospel of the priesthood" be a more appropriate designation, according to the relative importance attached to the different truths, which go to make up "evangelical sentiments ?" It is matter of re-

joining, indeed, that the great truths of the Kingdom are firmly held and taught by all who hold evangelical sentiments ; but is it not to be regretted that they are so generally separated from that in which they find their unity ? The great doctrines of Regeneration and Sanctification, for example, are clearly and fully taught in our Evangelical Theology ; but it is not at all usual to bring them out in their relations to that kingdom, which is the sum and substance of the Gospel. Some injurious results of this will afterwards be noticed. It is enough now to call attention to the fact, that the Kingdom of God *as such* does not bulk so largely in modern theology, as it does in the theology of the New Testament.

One reason of this no doubt, perhaps the main reason, is to be found in the history of controversy. The Royalty of Christ has not been subjected to the same fires of controversy as His prophetic and priestly offices. Not that this department of Theology has been free from the assaults of heresy ; but the questions, which have been raised concerning it, have been less fundamental in their nature, and by consequence less formidable. In connection with the prophetic office of Christ, the question of Inspiration has been a battle ground on which was felt to depend the fate of everything. In connection with the priestly office, the subject of the Atonement, which is believed and justly believed to be the foundation on which rests the entire edifice of Christianity, has been a matter of life and death controversy. When compared with these, how trivial have been the questions which have been agitated in direct connection with the kingly office of Christ : questions of church government, questions of the relations of Church and State, questions about the Millennium, each important enough in its place, but none of them to be compared in fundamental importance with the great subjects of Inspiration and Atonement. What has been the consequence ? In the first place, the advantages which result from severe controversy have been wanting. It is

acknowledged by all that have given attention to the history of doctrines, that controversy has been the most effectual means of bringing special doctrines into prominence, of clearing them from confusions of thought, and defining them with precision ; and we believe accordingly that, because there has been so little controversy directly affecting the kingly office of Christ, the truth concerning it is much less prominent, much less clearly apprehended, much less definitely grasped than the truth concerning the prophetic or priestly offices. In the second place, the *kind* of controversy to which we are accustomed, in connection with the kingly office of Christ, has led to the disparagement of the true importance of the subject. For not only does controversy effect much in the way of bringing out the real importance of great doctrines, but also in the way of giving fictitious importance to altogether minor matters. A most notable instance of this is the extraordinary importance attached by thousands of otherwise enlightened Christians in the present day to the quantity of water used in baptism, and the manner of its application to the person, just as if the very essence of the religion of Jesus consisted in the most scrupulous adherence to matters of form, just as if it were the spirit that killed, and the letter that gave life. Now it would seem that the altogether disproportionate attention, which has been given to minor matters connected with the subject of the Kingdom, has had a tendency in the minds of many to elevate these minor matters into the first rank, so that they are looked upon as occupying almost the entire field ; and, as a matter of strictest consequence, the vast proportions of the great subject are narrowed to the measure of these minor matters. How many are there, for example, on the one hand, whose thinking on the subject of the Kingdom of Christ is almost confined within the limits of the narrow question, whether Christ will come before or after the Millennium, so that if they were to take up a book on the Kingdom, (the New Testament always excepted, of course,) they

would fully expect it to be all about the Millennium ! How many are there on the other hand, who would look for little, if anything else, in such a book than questions of church government—such a treatment of the subject as is to be found, for example, in Whately's " Kingdom of Christ," a book admirable indeed in its way and so far as it goes, but covering only the smallest fraction of the space which the title might entitle us to expect. Thus it is that, in our thoughts concerning the Kingdom, we have been diverted from its main matters to mere side issues, and we have been in danger of measuring the importance of the whole subject by that of the small parts of it, which have been most debated about in our times.

We believe then, that it is a want of the times to have attention called more earnestly and fully to the main subject, to the great things of the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Is there not an evidence of this want in the manner in which some time ago " Ecce Homo " was received ? The evil of this book, so far as there is evil in it, lies in its negative qualities, lies in what it does not contain, rather than in what it does contain. But, surely, its marvellous success cannot be accounted for by the absence of any thing. The secret of it must be sought for in its positive qualities. And that not only in the style. - We admit the superlative excellence of the style as one reason of the extent to which it has been read ; but have there not been hundreds of books on similar subjects, the style of which was equally excellent, that have never found their way beyond the customary range of theological readers ? Is not the secret of its success to be found in great measure in the prominence which is given throughout to the Kingdom of Christ, and to the fact that such essential matters as faith and holiness are dealt with in strict and close relation to the Kingdom ? The glaring defects of the author's treatment of the subject are sufficiently obvious to those who are careful to ascertain " the whole counsel of God." The kingdom which is there

presented is a kingdom without a foundation, for the priesthood of Christ is not acknowledged, and the Atonement is left entirely out of view. And not only so, but the very idea of a kingdom is truncated by the amputation of its right arm, for we look in vain for the *executive power*, which is the most conspicuous feature of the Kingdom, as presented in that Gospel which is "the Power of God unto Salvation." Power in fact there cannot be, when the Cross, which is the source of power, is left out of sight, and the Holy Spirit, who is its Dispenser, is refined away into a lifeless abstract principle; and thus the kingdom which we find in "Ecce Homo," when closely looked into, turns out to be no kingdom at all, but only a school or a society. And yet, notwithstanding these fundamental deficiencies, the prominence given in this book to the Kingdom of Christ, apart altogether from little questions of church government or the interpretation of prophecy, has come to many as a revelation of something which has been in the New Testament all the while, but which they have failed to notice. What then might be anticipated, if similar ability to that which has succeeded in awakening so much interest by a very partial exhibition of the truth concerning the Kingdom, were employed in setting forth the full Gospel of the Kingdom, as founded in the death, and centred in the endless life of "Messiah the Prince," "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords;" to whom "all *power* is given in heaven and in earth,"—power to pardon, power to regenerate, power to sanctify, power to save, power to bless, power to "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

Perhaps enough has been said to indicate the importance of viewing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the way in which it is specially presented in the New Testament, the importance of receiving the Gospel as essentially the Gospel of the Kingdom. It remains now to call attention to some important truths which are involved in this fundamental conception.

I. The first of these is the true and proper reality of the Kingdom. There is a vague impression widely prevalent, that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is only a figurative kingdom, that the word "kingdom," as applied to it, is used only by way of illustration, the reality (if reality there be) being supposed to lie in some very abstract idea, such as economy or dispensation, or scheme, or plan. We do not suppose the existence of any formal belief or disbelief in the matter, but only refer to the prevalence of a certain way of thinking, which tends to do away with the true and proper reality of the Kingdom of Christ, by reducing the language concerning it to the language of metaphor. Perhaps the way of thinking referred to cannot be better illustrated than by a reference to one of our standard works on theology. In Hill's lecture : on Divinity, two short paragraphs covering less than a single page, (p. 640, in Carter's edition, beginning of chapter on "covenant of grace") are all that are devoted to the consideration of the Kingdom as such. In the one of these, the subject is introduced thus : "The dispensation of the Gospel is often represented in Scripture under the notion of a kingdom." The other begins on this wise : "This (viz. the representation of the dispensation of the Gospel as a kingdom,) is a picture which is presented not only in the bold figures of the ancient prophets, but also in the more temperate language of the writers of the New Testament." Now, it is not the mere finding of such shadowy views of the Kingdom of Christ, in a standard work on theology, that is the significant point. It is that so many of us are able to read such statements without realizing how shadowy, how *nominal*, how "negative" they are. We are not so careless in regard to other great facts of the Gospel. Suppose the statement had been that "the death of Christ is often represented under the notion of an Atonement," would we not all be up in arms at once, and indignantly ask : Why hesitate for a moment to say that the death of Christ *is* an Atonement, *is the* Atonement ? Or sup-

pose the statement had been : " the relation of God to His people is often represented under the notion of Fatherhood," would we not eagerly turn from the cold *words* of a nominal theology, to the blessed *fact* as revealed in the truth of God, without any halting or hesitancy of language, that God *is* our Father, that the Divine Fatherhood is the deep and true reality, of which human fatherhood is but a shadow ? There are many illustrations used in Scripture to show us what the Kingdom is like, but the Kingdom itself is ever treated as a great reality. It is not something which may be compared to, or considered as, but which really is, a Kingdom ; and it is our duty jealously to guard against any thing which looks in the direction of reducing the great fact of the Gospel to a mere illustration. We do not say, indeed, that the views referred to deny all reality to the Kingdom of Christ. It would be a great mistake to suppose that figures and metaphors were necessarily destitute of reality. Take the beautiful metaphor : " The Lord is my Shepherd." What tender and blessed realities are contained here. But the reality of figures depends upon the realities on which they are based. If they have no solid foundation of substantive existence, they are reduced to a mere play of fancy. Given a true and proper reality as the substance of the Gospel, then such figures as the beautiful one above referred to become truly significant ; but if the very substance of the Gospel itself be treated as a figure, then must all the profusion of illustration which is based upon it, lose all its reality too. Can it be that any one to whom the truth of God is dear, will be disposed to regard with indifference a way of thinking or of teaching, which suggests that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Gospel of a figure, or the Gospel of a notion, or anything else than the good news of a great and glorious and blessed Reality ?

To the want of grasping the proper reality of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, may be traced some of the prevailing errors of our times. What is High-Churchism for exam-

ple, but the attempt of those who have failed to grasp the genuine reality of the Kingdom in the sphere of Faith, to find a counterfeit reality for it in the realm of Sense? The High-Churchman is right in his fundamental position: There is one Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, and those who would be saved must, of necessity, belong to the one true Kingdom. It is vain to try to dislodge him from this position, for it is the truth. His error is not that he makes too much of the Kingdom. This cannot be, if the Gospel be, as it is, the Gospel of the Kingdom. His error is, that he mistakes the Kingdom altogether, fails to apprehend that it is a spiritual Kingdom, which a man must be born again in order to see—a reality, therefore, not to sense but to faith. It is, that, after all the Master has said, he persists in seeking a Kingdom which “cometh with observation,” concerning which you can say: “Lo here! or lo there!”—especially “Lo here!” for as soon as the belief is entertained that the essential reality of the Kingdom of Christ is to be found in a visible organization, immediately the complacent result is apt to be reached: “The Kingdom of the Lord, the Kingdom of the Lord are We!” Those who are quite consistent, however, cannot always stop at “Lo here.” They are forced to go the length of “Lo there.” And herein we see the reason why such men as John Henry Newman, and those who, like-minded, have followed in his steps, have been unable to find a resting-place, short of that vast ecclesiastical system which approaches most nearly to the vulgar conception of a real kingdom, that great world-kingdom, which has (or has had, for it loses fast in these days) its monarch, its court, its ministers of state, its territory, its armies, its revenues, its worldly policy, prerogatives, and powers.

Again, look at Millenarianism. It will, of course, be understood that by Millenarianism is not meant, belief in a coming Millennium, which shall be marked in a peculiar manner by the triumphs of our King, for this we find in the sure word of prophecy; but we

designate by this term, the views of those who find in the Millennium *the* Kingdom of Christ, the real Kingdom as distinguished from a kind of nominal non-descript economy or dispensation at present subsisting to which the name Kingdom may, in a certain complimentary sense, be applied. Well, what is Millenarianism, but the refuge of those who, having not only, like the churchman, failed to grasp the genuine reality of the Kingdom, in the sphere of faith, but having also failed to find it in any of the visible organizations of the day, are driven to postpone the realization of it till some time in the future? Now, what is it that is expected to give *reality* to the Kingdom in the Millennium, by those who deny its reality now? The answer to this question leads us at once into the realm of sense, into the midst of things seen and temporal. The distinctive reality which is expected in the future is a sense-reality, while the faith-reality of the present is lost sight of or denied. The hope of things seen and temporal takes the place of the faith of things unseen and eternal. And yet those who hold such views often claim to be specially spiritually minded! It is the old trouble of the tyranny of sense over faith, the confusion of the Real and the Seen, the nominalism of Locke, which logically leads to the scepticism of Hume, and practically issues in that materialism, which is so influential in some of the main currents of "modern thought."

What is wanted, in the present day, in view of these different tendencies and others like them, is a full and faithful proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom, a Kingdom which is such to faith and not to sight, a Kingdom of Heaven and not of earth, of God and not of men, a Kingdom which is "opened to all believers," not exhibited to all gazers, a Kingdom which is "not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The great reformation of the sixteenth century turned upon faith in the Priesthood of Christ. Does not the prevalence of such errors as these call for a second

reformation, which shall turn upon faith in the Kingdom of Christ?

II. Another important truth involved in the fundamental conception of the Gospel, as the Gospel of the Kingdom is this : The Kingdom is ONE. It is not the unity of the Kingdom within itself that is here referred to. This is so obvious that it need not be dwelt upon. It is not that all who belong to the Kingdom are one ; it is that there is only one Kingdom ; that is, only one Kingdom of God with which we have anything to do. And this one Kingdom is the mediatorial Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. We sometimes speak of the Kingdom of the Father as distinct from the Kingdom of the Son ; but the distinction, though of logical utility and convenience, is not a practical distinction. With the Kingdom of the Father as distinguished from the Kingdom of Christ we have, we can have, nothing whatever to do. The Kingdom of the Father can become a reality to us only in the Kingdom of the Son. "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me." An attempt has been made by some of those who postpone the Kingdom of Christ to the Millennium to use this distinction practically. They tell us that we are now under the Kingdom of the Father, while the Kingdom of Christ, as the Mediator, shall not commence till the beginning of the thousand years. The inconsistency of this position with the teaching of Scripture has been well shown by Brown and others ; but, apart from this, how strange it is that such a position as this should not at once be recognized as of the very essence of Deism, involving as it does the belief that God can be known and obeyed apart from the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ !

2. A similar mistake is often made in regard to the Kingdom of God in Israel, which occupies almost, if not altogether, as prominent a place in the Old Testament, as the Kingdom of Heaven occupies in the New. There is

an idea that it was God, as distinguished from Christ, who was the King of Israel under the Old Testament. Thus a radical distinction is made between "the Theocracy" of the Old Testament and the Kingdom of God in the New.

Here the question may be raised in passing: Why use the term "Theocracy" at all? If the expression "Kingdom of God" had not been a New Testament one, the probability is that we should have called the Old Testament Kingdom the Kingdom of God, and the New Testament Kingdom the Kingdom of Christ or of Heaven. But it so happens that the New Testament Kingdom is, almost uniformly, called "the Kingdom of God;" and, accordingly, it looks as if it were for the express purpose of hindering the identification of the one Kingdom with the other, that when we speak of the old one, the English "Kingdom of God" is veiled and hidden away under the Greek equivalent "Theocracy." But why should we try to put asunder what God hath joined together? It was desirable that Matthew, writing as he did for his countrymen especially, should use a distinctive name, and, accordingly, we find the name "Kingdom of Heaven" prevailing in his Gospel; but even he sometimes uses the common name also, and the distinctive name is used nowhere else throughout the New Testament.

The essential distinction which is sometimes made, and so often taken for granted, between the Theocracy of the Old Testament and the Kingdom of God in the New is founded upon two fallacies. The first of these is that the revelation of the Old Testament is a revelation of the Father as a present God and King, with prophetic passages interspersed throughout, pointing forward to the coming Son of God as the future Lord and King. This we say is a fallacy. It must be so if what the Apostle John says is true: "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father,

He hath declared Him." It is contrary to the whole tenour of Scripture to suppose that there can be a revelation of God to man otherwise than through His Son. "In the beginning was the Word." He was not "made flesh" indeed, nor did He dwell among us *as a man* until the fulness of the times, but from the beginning He was with the sons of men as Jehovah God, bringing God near to men, bringing men near to God, in His own glorious Person, and by that glorious Work of His, which was to be wrought out in the fulness of the times. It is fully recognized by all who accept the Gospel in its fulness, that it was only through "the One Mediator between God and men" that men were saved from sin and wrath under the old covenant. It is never doubted that the Son of God was the Divine Priest of the old covenant, the human priesthood of the line of Aaron being only a faint and passing shadow of His own coming as a human priest. Why then should we fail to grasp in the same manner the Gospel truth that the Son of God was the Divine King of the old covenant, who had His dwelling above the mercy-seat and between the Cherubim, the human dynasty of the line of David being only a faint and passing shadow of His own coming as a human king? Surely such general considerations are quite sufficient, without referring to the numerous passages that might be appealed to separately. It may be well, however, to point out one as a specimen. In the sixth chapter of Isaiah, we have an account of that splendid vision which the prophet saw in the temple in the year that king Uzziah died, the vision of a Throne and One sitting upon it. So overcome was the prophet by the glory of the vision that he exclaimed, "Woe is me, for I am undone . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of Hosts." Now if we turn to John xii. 41, comparing the whole passage there with the whole passage here, we find it expressly asserted that it was the glory of CHRIST that Isaiah saw. It is true indeed that the full doctrine of the

Son as distinct from the Father was not then clearly apprehended ; but it is not doctrine we are now dealing with, but fact ; and the knowledge or ignorance of the people cannot be held to alter the fact. It was a fact, whether they knew it or not, whether they understood it or not, that the Lord Christ was the prophet, priest *and king* of Israel then, as He is the prophet, priest and king of His people now.

The other fallacy referred to is that the Theocracy of the Old Testament was a temporal kingdom merely, while the Kingdom of God in the New Testament is a spiritual kingdom. We here touch an error which reaches further than the matter immediately in hand. It is not uncommon to find the old covenant distinguished from the new in this, that the promises of the former were mainly temporal, while those of the latter are mainly spiritual. And, in accordance with this distinction, the promise of the Seed is spoken of as if it meant a numerous progeny of natural descendants—a promise, even such as it is, which has been fulfilled to a remarkably limited extent to Abraham, as compared with the remote ancestor of the Chinese, for example ; and the promise of the Land as if it meant the gift of so many hundred thousand acres, more or less, and miserably little at the most as compared with the hundreds of thousands, not of acres, but of square miles, which fell to the lot of the great kingdoms of the world without any promise at all ! Truly there is much yet to be learned in regard to the significance of the Apostle's words : "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," by those who *literally kill* the old covenant by shutting their eyes to the fact that the promise of the Seed derives *all* its value from the spiritual element in it, which never had reality for any but the spiritual seed, and which has and ever shall have reality for all the spiritual seed, whether coming from Abraham by natural descent or not ; and that the promise of the Land derives all its value from the spiritual element in it—the assurance, viz., that

these blessed acres should be sacredly set apart as a sanctuary for the spiritual worship of the Lord God of Heaven, when the vast miles of the world kingdoms should be wholly given to the idolatry and sensuality of earth,—as a nursery for the development during centuries of infancy and childhood of that Kingdom of God which in the fulness of the times should be set up in the Field of the World.

These illustrations of the wider application of the fallacy have prepared the way for dealing with it in its special application to the Kingdom. And here it is very strange that we should so often wonder at the Jews for their carnal notions concerning the Kingdom of God, when we attach precisely the same carnal notions to that very Kingdom which was all they had to give them any idea of it, and to some of those very passages from which they derived their impressions concerning the nature of the coming Kingdom. Is it not strange that so many of us should first be amazed at “the slowness of heart” of the Jews, and then exhibit the same slowness of heart ourselves—that we should first blame them for interpreting the promises of the Kingdom in a carnal sense, and then cling with the utmost tenacity to the carnal sense when interpreting them ourselves, and that too after all the advantage we have had from the experience of eighteen centuries of a purely spiritual Kingdom? Out of many illustrations which might be employed, let us take one, and draw it out as fully as our limits will allow. One of the main prophecies of the Kingdom is to be found in Gen. xlix. 10: “The Sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a Law-giver from between his feet, till Shiloh come.” Now, how constantly do we find this blessed assurance interpreted as if it were a shred of political news, a piece of political prognostication? “The Sceptre” is interpreted as an earthly sceptre, the “Law-giver” suggests no other or higher conception than the head of an earthly government, and the gist of the whole

promise is made to be, that a certain earthly State, of very small account among the great kingdoms of the world, shall continue to exist till the coming of a certain person, and then shall pass away. It might be suggested by the way, that on this principle of interpretation we should rather call it a threatening than a promise. If the coming of the promised Shiloh was to be the signal for the passing away of the very Kingdom which was the subject of the prophecy, then Judah and all true lovers of God's Kingdom might well pray that Shiloh should be very long in coming. But let this pass, and look at the subsequent difficulties in which the political interpretation involves us. We have first a long period during which there was no political kingdom at all. Then shortly after the setting up of the political kingdom, we have it rent in twain. Later on we find first the one part of it, and then the other utterly subverted. Then we have hundreds of years, during the greater part of which it cannot be said with any honesty that there was a political kingdom at all. And when Shiloh did come, there was no political kingdom in Judah to pass away. These difficulties have been felt to be of such magnitude, that endless ingenuity has been expended in the attempt to evade or surmount them. Some have tried to twist the history to make it agree with the passage, and others have tried to twist the passage to make it agree with the history, and neither of the methods has been found satisfactory. Whereas all becomes simple, natural, beautiful and most true when interpreted, not according to the letter which killeth, but according to the spirit, when it is freed from those carnal Jewish notions which have obscured it, when it is lifted out of the region of politics into the region of Truth, where our Lord's conversation with Pilate, as recorded by John, might well lead us to look for the Kingdom of the Prophetic Word. Then we find a beautiful consistency both with the history of Truth, and with the truth of History—with the former as regards the inner Reality, with the latter as regards the outer Form of the Kingdom.

First in regard to the inner Reality. Did not the Kingdom of the Truth, the Kingdom, in its essential, spiritual reality, continue in Judah all the while? Was not the Kingdom of God among the Chosen People before either Saul or David was anointed, while as yet Jehovah was their only King? Was not the Kingdom of God in Judah still when her sons and daughters sat "by Babel's streams," and hung their harps upon the willows, and wept as they remembered Zion? There, in their remembrance of Zion, have we the evidence that, though the form of the Kingdom had passed away for a time, the great reality remained in the weeping heart of Judah still. Truth to tell, the Kingdom had much more nearly passed away, while yet the political "sceptre" and "law-giver" remained both in Judah and in Israel, in those dark days of infidelity and idolatry, when poor Elijah thought God's Kingdom, the true Theocracy, was reduced to one solitary individual, till he was assured by Him who "seeth not as man seeth" that He still had left remaining seven thousand loyal men. And was there not in Judah, through all her captivities and all her sufferings from foreign oppressors, a true Kingdom of God, a very little one indeed at times, and specially in the times which immediately preceded the Advent of Shiloh; but small as it was, was it not there all the while? And when we seek for the fulfilment of the old promise as to the continuance of the Kingdom on till the coming in human form of the King, we are to seek it, not where so many interpreters of prophecy have sought it, in the political administration of that infidel and villain, belonging to Idumea and not to Judah, who happened to sway a little sceptre, and give out his little laws under the great sceptre and mighty law of the foreign tyrant, but in the lowly loyal lives of the Simeons and Annas of the time, who had the Sceptre and the Law in their hearts, and who were waiting for the fulfilment of the Kingdom in the coming of Shiloh. The *fulfilment* of the Kingdom,—for there is no evidence

that these faithful ones imagined that the coming of Shiloh was to be the subversion of that Kingdom which as true Israelites they dearly loved, but every evidence that they regarded it as the firm establishment of Judah's throne, and the beginning of a triumphal progress which should not cease till every knee should bow before the Sceptre, and every tongue confess that Judah's King was Lord. So much for the fulfilment of the promise in regard to its inner reality.

And now a moment's glance at the consistency of the prophecy with history, so far as Form is concerned. Here we must bear in mind what Principal Fairbairn has so clearly shown in his work on Prophecy, that the great object of prophecy was to support the faith of God's people—a support which would be especially needed in times of darkness. Now if the outward earthly form, in which the Kingdom was for a time embodied, had been predestined to be abiding, had nothing been anticipated in the process of history which would *look like* the passing away of the Kingdom, there would have been no need of such a special promise as that in Genesis xlix. 10. On the other hand, the very fact that there is such a promise would lead us *a priori* to anticipate that there would be times, probably long times, when it would *seem* that the sceptre had departed from Judah—times during which it would seem necessary for those who were waiting for the salvation of God to have some assurance to rest upon that, though the form had passed away, the reality was with them still. Thus we find that, when once we get rid of these carnal Jewish ideas of the Kingdom, we discover not only an agreement between the prophecy and the true spiritual history of the Kingdom, but also a correspondence between the expectations it suggests concerning the outward and formal history of the Kingdom, and the actual facts of the case as seen in the external history of the political kingdom of Israel. We have drawn out this illustration at great length, but the importance of the subject seemed

to warrant it, for its own sake as well as for the use to which it is now put, as an illustration of the second fallacy on which the radical separation of the Theocracy from the Kingdom of Christ is based, viz., that the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament was essentially a temporal kingdom.

If then the Old Testament Theocracy or Kingdom of God was essentially, and in reality, though not in form, of the same nature as the Kingdom of God in the New Testament, and if then as now, the Lord Christ was its King, it follows that it is the same Kingdom throughout. It is true indeed that the Gospel of the Kingdom was preached by Christ and His Apostles as something new. But it is evident that the newness of the Kingdom had reference not to the inner reality, but to the outward form. The change which Christ inaugurated, when He came in human form, was not a change of kingdoms, but only of administration. It was the inauguration of a new and much more glorious era in the history of the Kingdom of Jehovah. What care is there taken both by the Evangelists in their Gospels and by the Apostles in their discourses, as recorded in the book of the Acts, to call attention to the fact that Jesus of Nazareth had come to occupy "the Throne of David." And besides these express declarations, how often does the substantial identity of the old and new Kingdoms come out incidentally, as for example in these words of Jesus to the Jewish priests and elders: "The Kingdom of God shall be *taken from you, and given* to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof," and in the hosannas of the multitudes on the occasion of the King's entry into Jerusalem: "Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest." The case as regards the Kingdoms of the same nature as that in regard to the gift of the Spirit. As a matter of fact the Spirit had been with the people of God from the beginning; and the newness of the gift consisted not in the giving of another and dif-

ferent Spirit, but in a new and much fuller dispensation of the same Spirit. And in the same way the Kingdom of God had been in the world from the beginning ; and the newness of the Kingdom which Christ preached consisted not in the setting up of another and different Kingdom, but in the establishment and *fulfilment* (πλήρωσις) of the old Kingdom in a new and much more widely extended form and administration. It is of great importance, in regard of the unity and harmony of God's dealing with men in all ages, to recognize the Gospel of the Kingdom as *the* Gospel throughout, the same Gospel which was "before preached unto Abraham," the same Gospel which was announced to our first parents, when the triumph of the Kingdom of God over the Kingdom of Satan, through the suffering of the King himself, was first dimly shadowed forth in these wonderful words of prophecy and promise : "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel."

3. There is a third distinction often made, which is convenient enough, and even necessary sometimes as a logical distinction, but which when so pressed as to convey the idea of two distinct kingdoms is quite unchristian and untrue : we refer to the distinction between the Kingdom of Nature and Providence on the one hand, and the Kingdom of Grace on the other. How many are there that suppose they can worship God as the God of Nature apart from Jesus Christ, forgetting that they cannot worship God at all, or know God at all, except as He is revealed in Jesus Christ. It is true that those who have no faith in Jesus Christ are, notwithstanding their unbelief, under the government of God ; but they have no standing in any kingdom of His. The only standing they have is in the Kingdom of Darkness ; and when apart from the Mediator they seek to draw near to God in any manner of address, they are only groping in the darkness for some one they do not know ; it is not

the God of Truth they are addressing, for out of Christ He is unknown, and unknowable—it is some god of their own imagining, some heathen or philosophic Pan, some “unknown God” whom they “ignorantly worship.” And in so far as believers in Christ themselves, in their way of thinking, separate the God of Nature and of Providence from the Lord Jesus Christ, in so far are they worshipping the God of the Deist or the Pantheist, in so far are they for the time bowing in the temple of Rimmon. Here is where many lose much of the glory of the Gospel of the Kingdom, by failing to take with them their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ through all the wonders of Nature and all the windings of Providence. Nature and Providence are not a kingdom but a chaos, until they find their unity and harmony in Him who is the only mediator between God and man, the only reconciler of heaven and earth, the only saviour from the world’s evil. It is true indeed that not a little of the order and beauty of nature and history may be found and has been found apart from faith in Jesus Christ, but then there has always remained discord enough to spoil all the harmony, ugliness enough to mar all the beauty. “That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.” And though a controlling mind is found everywhere, a beating heart is found nowhere. All is cold and therefore dead;

“And all the phantom, Nature, stands
With all the music in her tone
A hollow echo of my own,
A hollow form with empty hands.”

From this “hollow form with empty hands” we turn in faith to Him in whom all fulness dwells; we turn with longing to know something better and kindlier than dead abstractions, rigid laws, frigid order, feelingless motion, the relentless, ceaseless march of destruction and decay with chaos or nonentity for its starting point,

and death and darkness for its goal. And we find a Kingdom, a Kingdom of Truth founded in Love, the Kingdom of Him, who "hath made everything beautiful in his time," who makes "all things work together for good."

"Christ hath sent us down the angels;
And the whole earth and the skies
Are illumed by altar-candles,
Lit for blessed mysteries:
And a Priest's Hand through creation
Waveth calm and consecration,
And Pan is dead."

And why should we Christians give the old heathen-god a resurrection? Why should we take the glorious realm of Nature from the Living Christ, and give it to the dead Pan? Now that a foundation, for the resolution of the great mystery of evil, has been laid in the priestly sacrifice of Christ, and upon that foundation a true Kingdom of God has been reared, vested in the person of our risen Lord, why should we limit its range so as to make of the Kingdom a mere province? Why should we be so wanting in loyal allegiance to Him, who is King of Nations and of Nature, as well as King of Saints, as to relegate any part of His vast dominion to the God of the Deist or the Pantheist? Let us not hesitate to accept Him as "God over all blessed for ever;" and whether our thoughts take eagle's wings and roam throughout that mighty temple of space where the wondrous works of creation declare His power, or travel backwards through that mystic temple of time, where the wondrous works of Providence declare His wisdom, or mount upwards to that inner shrine, where our great High Priest has entered to prepare a new and glorious temple, in which the wondrous work of redeeming love shall be for ever sung, let us pay our homage to the One Lord Jesus Christ, on whose head are many crowns, and in whom all things in heaven and in earth are gathered into one.

4. There is still another distinction of logical value, which needs some care in the handling, lest being pressed too far it should become practically injurious: the distinction, namely, between the Kingdom of Grace and the Kingdom of Glory. We believe, indeed, that the essential unity of these is very seldom lost sight of by Christians of any intelligence. It is, almost uniformly, acknowledged that the future Kingdom of Glory will be but the continuation, the perfection, the consummation of the present Kingdom of Grace. But though this truth is one which does not need to be insisted on for the sake of believers, it is of the greatest importance that it should be clearly set before unbelievers. There are scarcely any unbelievers who do not fancy that they wish to go to Heaven when they die. What a miserable delusion, a delusion based upon the falsehood that the Kingdom of Glory will be essentially different from the Kingdom of Grace. Do they really imagine that, after they have deliberately preferred the Kingdom of Satan here, they will prefer the other there? The Kingdom of God is open to them now. They could enter any day they chose. But they will not. And why will they not? Because they do not wish to do it. They do not care for God. They do not care for His Kingdom. Do they imagine that, after they have lived a few more years in ungodliness, they will suddenly become godly—that, after they have kept up their aversion to the Kingdom of God all their lifetime, increasing as it must do all the while, they will suddenly when they die turn round and have a strong desire to enter it? On the contrary, as they are, every year and every day, becoming more and more unfit for it, so are they, every year and every day, becoming more unwilling to enter it. If a man has really a desire for the Kingdom of God, he will enter it now; if he has no such desire, let him not imagine that it will suddenly spring up in the moment of death. A faithful proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom is very much needed in our time to correct the pre-

vailing notion that men live on here till they die, and then, after death, are admitted into the Kingdom of God, or sent to the domain of Satan, according as their lives have been. This is the creed of the great majority of worldly people, in many cases their whole creed. We cannot, indeed, say that it is absolutely false, but there is a false impression at the bottom of it. There is a dangerous fallacy lurking in the words: "After death are admitted or are sent." These expressions indicate the belief that, on the part of the persons referred to (whatever their views be as to what they deserve), the admitting of them to the one place, or the sending of them to the other, is solely the doing of God, and is done after death. Now, this dangerous error will disappear before the truth that the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan are both here on earth, and, accordingly, that the true state of the case is not that, *after* men have lived and died, God *allows them* to enter His Kingdom, or *thrusts them down* to Satan's Kingdom; but this: that they have already, of their own accord, entered the one or the other, and after death, each one goes "to his own place"—those who have belonged to the Kingdom of God on earth, to the Kingdom of God in heaven; those who have belonged to the Kingdom of Darkness in time, to the Kingdom of Darkness in eternity. Ah, if we would think of it, there is a flood of light thrown upon what is felt to be a very dark subject in such glimpses of truth as these: "that he might *go to his own place*;" "these shall go away (not be sent away, but *go away*) into everlasting punishment." That none whom we can reach may ever go that dreadful journey, let us faithfully set before them the one Kingdom of Light, as a present Kingdom, over whose open door is written this Gospel: "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

Our present limits will not allow us to enter on other important truths involved in the fundamental conception of the Gospel as the Gospel of the Kingdom. We shall

only add a word in conclusion, bearing on the great practical importance of the whole subject. It cannot be doubted that the great want of the age, as it is of all ages, is Faith, more faith ; faith not so much in the past as in the present ; faith in the Lamb of God, indeed, but in the Lamb of God "in the midst of the Throne ;" faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as He is, in the omnipresent love and power, and glory of His exaltation ; faith in that one Kingdom of God in Christ, which is Heaven's Gospel to us now and here. There is much to be expected, indeed, from Hope, the hope of the glories of the Kingdom coming, for there is a sense in which the Kingdom is *coming* all the time, and will be coming till the consummation of all things, when the Lord's Prayer shall be finally and for ever turned into praise. But the value and power of this hope itself is dependent upon faith in the Kingdom as a present reality, for apart from the faith of the present, the hope of the future is a delusion. If Faith fails to see the Kingdom now and here, Hope has no place to stand from which to see the Kingdom coming. For the Kingdom coming will be *essentially* the same as that which is among us now—a Kingdom not of outward pomp and show, but of glories such as faith alone can see—a Kingdom still of "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" as its essence, whatever visible glories may gather around it in the latter days ; differing from the present mainly in this, that there will be more righteousness, more peace, and more joy, till the perfection of them all is reached,—in this, that whereas the will of God is done but partially in the Kingdom as it is, in the Kingdom coming it shall be done "on earth as it is in Heaven."

The first thing wanted, then, is more faith, faith in the Gospel as a Gospel not of the past or the future merely, but as a Gospel of the present ; faith to grasp those unseen realities which are the deepest and truest of all, which shall be round abiding and substantial, when the things of sense around us, which seemed the substance, have like

shadows passed away. Let there but be among professing Christians a genuine faith in the Kingdom of Christ, and what a change there would be in the signs of the times ; what altered estimates : what new experiences ! Then would it no longer be thought of less account to be an ambassador of Christ than an ambassador of England, or even of Japan ; then would there be no longer need to beg for men to fill positions of self-denying honour in the Kingdom of Heaven, while the courts of earth are thronged with office-seekers day by day continually ; then would it no longer be thought unreasonable that a citizen of God's Kingdom should be expected to contribute for the maintenance of its terrible struggle against sin and darkness, on a scale not altogether contemptible when compared with the amount he gives ungrudgingly for the support of his earthly government in time of war, or even in times of peace ; then should we no longer have reason to be afraid or ashamed to allow a comparison to be made in financial resources between the Kingdom of Heaven and such a poor crippled earthly kingdom as is now the Republic of France, or blush to be asked the simple question whether the faith of those who believe in France and Thiers to-day be not something better than the faith of most of those who profess to believe in Heaven and God ; then might we expect to see, among believers in Christ, a spirit of loyalty and devotion, and patriotism, as much purer and nobler, and more heroic than any that has ever been celebrated in the world's song or story, as the Kingdom of Heaven is greater and more glorious than any kingdom here below. All this might be, if **only** Christians of the present day had faith steadily to **look through** the door that has been opened in Heaven, and keep before their eyes, and in their hearts, the Throne, and Him who sits on it.

That He is "a Priest upon his Throne" we must never, never, forget. In advocating for the Kingdom a place of **greater** prominence than is usually accorded to it in

modern theology, far be it from us to make anything less of the priesthood. Whatever prominence is given to the Kingdom of Christ, as it is presented in the Scriptures, must, of necessity, be given equally to His priestly work, for it is the foundation, and the only foundation, on which the Kingdom rests ; and the more you make of the building, the more, of course, you make of the foundation on which it stands. If the priestly and kingly offices were to be judged of in importance apart the one from the other, the precedence must be given to the priestly office, for the simple reason that a foundation without a building is something, whereas a building without a foundation is worse than nothing. But if they are to be viewed in indissoluble union, as the word of God, and the reality of things alike demand, then it by no means endangers the fundamental importance of the Cross, to give all due prominence to the Crown of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our faith must ultimately rest upon a Christ who suffered and died, but proximately it rests on a Christ who lives and reigns. Surely it cannot be wrong, when asked concerning the object of our faith, to say—"It is Christ that died : *Yea, rather that is risen again, who is at the Right Hand of God.*" Yes, what is wanted first and most, in these our days, is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as a present, living, reigning Lord and Saviour, in whom now centre all light, all love and all power—the light of the Word, the love of the Cross, the power of the Spirit ; all blended in the present glory of our King ; all gathered into one "pure river of water of Life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God, and of the Lamb."





CANADA

Presbyterian Church Pulpit.

BY REV. WILLIAM CAVEN,

PROFESSOR OF EXEGETICS, KNOX COLLEGE, TORONTO.

STANDARDS OF OUR CHURCH.



DOCUMENTS of the nature of Confessions of Faith are found in the Church from a very early period in its history. It has been supposed by many that, when the Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy to "hold fast the *form of sound words* which he had heard of him," there is reference to some brief Statement of the main points of Christian doctrine, drawn up by the Apostle himself, or by him in conjunction with the other Apostles. The "good profession," which Timothy had "professed before many witnesses," has been, sometimes, understood as referring to the same thing. Such a reference, in either case, may be very doubtful; at the same time, there are several passages in the Scriptures which may be pointed to as condensed Summaries of what God has been pleased to reveal to men; and which are, in some sense, the prototypes of the Creeds, Confessions of Faith, Symbols of various kinds, which have been subsequently produced in the Church.

The best known, and one of the oldest, if not the very

oldest of the Symbols which have come down to us, is the Apostles' Creed, so called. The story of each of the Apostles contributing his part to this composition, and of the whole being stamped with direct apostolical authority, is, no doubt, a fiction ; and was not heard of in the Church till near the end of the fourth century. In subjoining to their catechisms the Creed, with the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, the Westminster divines say :— " It is here annexed, not as though it were composed by the Apostles, or ought to be esteemed canonical Scripture, as the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, but because it is a brief sum of the Christian Faith, agreeable to the Word of God, and anciently received in the churches of Christ." This language is well chosen ; and, while refusing to regard the Creed as inspired, we need not hesitate to accept its doctrine, so far as it goes, as " agreeable to the Word of God." Luther says of it :— " This Confession of Faith we did not make nor invent, nor did the Fathers before us ; but, as a bee collects honey from the beautiful and fragrant flowers of all sorts, so is this symbol briefly and accurately put together, out of the books of the prophets and apostles, for children and simple-hearted Christians."

Then we have, from the fourth century, the Nicene Creed ; in which the doctrine of the Trinity is carefully defined, in opposition to Arianism, and other errors touching this fundamental truth. In the following century, the Council of Chalcedon issued a Creed, setting forth, with much precision, the Church's doctrine as to the person of Christ ; in opposition to those who, on the one hand, deny that our Lord possessed two natures, and those who, on the other hand, ascribe to Him a double personality.

The Athanasian Creed is another well-known ancient Symbol, though, like the Apostles' Creed, its designation is spurious, and its composition later than the time of the celebrated Father whose name it bears.

The Reformation gave birth to a great deal of symbolic literature. Those who left the Church of Rome found it necessary to set forth clear and unambiguous statements of their belief, that all men might know what they held, and that they might deliver their testimony against the corruptions of the Body from which they had separated. They did not reject the old Creeds, though they condemned Rome ; but they required to give a much fuller statement than the ancient Church had done, of all that relates to man's condition by nature, and to the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. Then, too, the unhappy divisions of the Reformation led to the multiplication of doctrinal formularies, or Confessions of Faith ; each party finding it necessary to define its position, not only as towards Rome, but also as towards the other Protestant churches. The following are among the best known, and most important, of the Confessions of modern Protestantism :—The Augsburg Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Articles of the Church of England, and the Westminster Confession.

We wish to point out some of the principal advantages which the Church derives from its symbolical books ; and to urge the importance of having a due regard to the excellent subordinate Standards, which it is our own privilege, as a branch of the Presbyterian Church, to possess. But, inasmuch as objections, some of them apparently formidable, are urged against this whole class of Writings—against promoting any merely human Instruments to the place which Confessions of Faith have held, whether in the early Church, or among the churches of the Reformation—it will be necessary to consider these objections with a little care. The intelligence and Christian worth of those adducing *some* of these objections, renders it imperative that we should not overlook them.

1. It is objected to doctrinal Formularies that they *repress free inquiry in religion, and thus hinder the growth of theological science*. Here, it is said, you have the Church

bound down to the past, and all unfettered theological inquiry forbidden, and even stigmatised. This is complained of as an intolerable bondage, and, on the part of Protestants, quite inconsistent with their fundamental principle, of the right of private judgment. We are reminded that, in all the other departments of science, knowledge is progressive,—errors are being continually purged, and important additions made to truth. So has it been in Astronomy, in Chemistry, and in Geology. What would have been the consequence had progress in these sciences been barred by an immovable creed? If we are at liberty to differ from our fathers when they hold that the sun revolves around the earth, and that the universe was created in six literal days, why bind us to accept their Theology,—to consider the doctrine of the Trinity, or of Justification by Faith, as firm and settled? It is further said that the churches, by their Confessions, are not only preventing progress in scientific theology, but are repressing and extinguishing noble aspirations after a deeper acquaintance with religion, and are producing a great deal of insincerity in the case of those who cannot afford to break with the Church, whilst thoroughly dissatisfied with her Formularies.

In the objection to Creeds, now rehearsed, there is an important, a fundamental misconception as to the nature of theological Science and inquiry. It is forgotten that *all the facts of the theologian are found in the Bible*. The Church, in drawing up her Creeds, has to use only the materials furnished her in that Word which “cannot be broken,” and from which we may not “take away,” and to which we may not “add.” The Church has not to go out into the wide field of nature and extend her observations from age to age, collecting facts from which deductions may be made; nor does the Church wait upon the progress of the mental sciences, in order to incorporate in her Confessions the results of an advancing metaphysics, or to adjust her Definitions in accordance

with such results. Hence, if she faithfully studies all that the Scriptures say concerning any doctrine,—the doctrine of the Trinity, of the Divinity of our Lord, of the Divinity and Personality of the Spirit, of the Fall, of the Atonement, of Regeneration, of Faith, of Justification,—if she carefully brings together and analyzes all scripture statements in regard to such matters, and expresses herself in accordance therewith, her Definitions can never need fundamental revision. She cannot seriously err, in the great doctrines, unless unfaithful in the examination of Scripture.

Let it be shown from Scripture, that any doctrine in our Confessions is wrong, and the necessity of revision will have been established. All our Creeds, and all our teachings are amenable to Scripture. “If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” It is, therefore, a perfectly reasonable thing that the Church should be asked to shew that, in constructing her Confessions, she has rightly understood the Word of God, and neither gone beyond nor fallen short of its statements. The Church may not claim infallibility in the interpretation of Scripture, and meet with her anathema every one who questions her exegesis. Nay, apart from any challenge given, it may be right and proper that the Church’s Formularies should, at times, be carefully revised, so as to have them not only in harmony with Scripture, but to secure that their presentation of the truth shall be well suited to the peculiar necessities of the period. It was a wise thing, unquestionably, for the churches of the Reformation to draw up new Symbols; for the ancient ones, while unobjectionable so far as they went, were inadequate in the new condition of the Church: they did not handle sufficiently certain questions of the utmost moment, which were in dispute between the Reformation and the Church of Rome. The Reformed Church of France, it is well known, decided to revise its Standards at regular intervals of four years. This, it

seems to us, is much more than is necessary, and not unattended with danger; but the whole Reformation would agree with the French Church in holding, that there may, in providence, be a call for revision of the Church's Standards; and that, in subjecting them to renewed examination, there is not necessarily evinced any desire to depart from the "faith once delivered to the saints."

But what we now concede, and should even, on proper occasion, be disposed to plead for, would by no means satisfy those whose objection to Church Standards we are now considering. They wish to have *nothing* settled, but everything thrown loose, in deference to the spirit of free inquiry which characterises the age. They chafe under every restraint on the licence of their speculation. The truth is, that this objection to Creeds has its roots very generally in scepticism, or in the denial of inspiration; and no one who reverently accepts the Scriptures as the oracles of God, can come to an understanding with those who urge it. They wish to treat religion simply as a philosophy—as an ordinary department of human speculation; and their views can never harmonise with those of the man who bows to the infallible authority of the Bible. It were uncharitable, indeed, to affirm that every one on whose lips the objection is found, is a disbeliever; for many take it up thoughtlessly; but we cannot draw back from the opinion expressed, that the objection under consideration is taken in the interest of scepticism, or the gravest error.

Most necessary it is that Christian liberty—the liberty with which Christ has made His people free, should be vindicated. The Presbyterian Church, it is believed, will be the very last to compromise this liberty, and to place any yoke of her own on the neck of Christ's freedmen. She will be sadly forgetful of her own history, if she acts otherwise. The right, also, of private judgment must be held sacred, even should men in the exercise of it depart

greatly from the truth. Civil pains and penalties must not be resorted to to secure soundness in the faith. Every man, who respects the good order of society, must be at liberty to think and speak as he pleases respecting the highest matters—responsible only to God. All this is very evident, and is not in dispute among us ; but all this has no connection with the demand for *freedom*, made by the opponents of Creeds and Confessions. We can satisfy them only by saying that we have no definite beliefs, and that we hardly wish to have any ; and that the liberty to indulge speculation in religion is of more importance than the attainment of that knowledge of the Father and of the Son which the Saviour has declared to be “life eternal.”

2. It is objected, again, to Confessions of Faith *that they produce and perpetuate divisions in the Church of Christ, and promote sectarianism*. Each party, it is said, will formulate Scripture doctrines in its own way—will have its own Creed, which its adherents must subscribe or approve of ; and thus comprehension and union among the disciples of Christ are rendered impossible.

Now, it is surely unnecessary to admit that the divisions of the Church of Christ are a great and serious evil ; and this, even though He who from evil adduces good, has been pleased to overrule them to the production of many benefits. It is especially to be lamented, that the children of the Reformation, after delivering their vigorous scriptural protest against Rome, should find themselves separated from one another. Anything which might help towards a union of the churches, on a scriptural basis, should be hailed with much thankfulness by the true disciples of Christ ; and not a little guilt rests on those who advocate measures that tend to perpetuate disunion. But we utterly fail to see how the putting away of our Confessions, should, in any way, contribute to such a union as is alone to be sought. It is not the Confessions, but the diversities in doctrine and in polity, which find expres-

sion in the Confessions, that keep denominations of Christians apart. Sweep away subordinate Standards entirely, and these bodies are as widely asunder as before. If, indeed, the Church of Christ needs no test of faith in order to membership, or in order to entrance upon office, but should receive into her fellowship, irrespective of belief, all who seek connection with her, we can then see how abjuring Standards might facilitate comprehension. But not many of those who urge the objection we are now considering, will argue for fellowship on any such principle.

We readily grant that it is very possible for churches to make their terms of communion, whether we refer to communion in ordinary membership or ministerial communion, too complex. The Articles of a church may relate to and define too many points; and, where this is the case, the charge of putting obstacles in the way of union really lies. But the error here is not in *having* Standards or Confessions, but in *descending to too great minuteness in these*; and defining, in the name of the Church, points on which the Scriptures do not clearly pronounce, and which should be left to the judgment of individual Christians.

3. The objection to Confessions of Faith which is most frequently met with, and which is, perhaps, the most effective against them is, *that they are derogatory to Scripture*. This objection is brought, not by men who are, more or less, of a sceptical spirit, and who wish to cast away the great and precious truths in which is the life of the Church, but most frequently by evangelical Christians—by persons who have no wish to enjoy a latitude in doctrine, which the most approved Symbols of the Reformation would not grant to them.

The Word of God, they say, is the only Standard of the Christian Church—the only Confession of Faith; and to associate with it, in this office, any uninspired production, is to do it great dishonour. To adopt other standards—standards purely human, how excellent, soever, in doc-

trine and composition—is to accuse the Scriptures of being insufficient as a rule and guide for the Church.

We, of course, are careful to reply, that the Formularies which obtain sanction among us, are regarded only as *Subordinate Standards*, and are so designated ; and that nothing can be further from our intention than to claim for these documents an equality, in any sense, with the Word of God ; even as the Westminster Confession itself says :—“ The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.” But this disclaimer is not held sufficient ; and we are told that, whatever our intention may be, the adoption of such writings is really a reflection upon the Scriptures, as implying either that they are wanting in fulness, or in clearness and order in statement.

Let us examine this objection, then, in the two parts of it. (1) The adoption of such standards is held to imply that the Scriptures are *not complete*. Our answer is, that Confessions of Faith are not, in any respect, designed to be supplementary to the Bible. It was never imagined by the churches compiling or accepting such Formularies, that they were at liberty to speak when Scripture was silent, to be explicit where Scripture was reserved, to add a single jot or tittle to that Law which is perfect. “ The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture ; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit or by tradition of men.” Thus the Westminster Confession: the following language from the Sixth Article of the Church of England is not less explicit :—“ Holy Scripture containeth all things

necessary to salvation ; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be requisite or necessary to salvation." All the principal Symbols of the Church either contain similar declarations, or were drawn up by men who would have entirely concurred in the language quoted. These subordinate standards simply aim at a condensed expression of the sense of many passages of Scripture. They are self-convicted if ever they go beyond the inspired Record. The reader of the Westminster Confession knows that the inspired authority for every principal statement or proposition is given at the foot of the page. Certain passages adduced may not be sufficient for the purpose for which they are quoted ; that is an entirely different matter ; but nothing can be clearer than that the compilers did not, in any thing, feel themselves at liberty to go a hairbreadth beyond the written Word. Whether it were *necessary*, or *could serve any good purpose* to have such books, seeing that the Scriptures are acknowledged to be, in all things, the supreme authority, is a question which we shall immediately endeavour to answer ; but it is unfair to represent the mere existence of such Subordinate Standards as insinuating that the Scriptures are not complete—not sufficient in fulness.

(2) It is averred, again, in the objection under review, that if the existence of Confessions of Faith does not impugn the sufficiency of Scripture, it implies that the Scriptures are defective in *clearness* and *arrangement*. For, if not, it is argued, why the need for these Compilations? Why not rest satisfied with the inspired statements in the form and order in which they occur in the Bible? Is it possible for the Scholastic Theologian to improve upon the Apostles and Prophets?

The full answer to this objection will be found in the statement which we are about to make, of the *purposes served* by Creeds and Confessions ; but we would, at pre-

sent, observe, that no person regards it as in disparagement of the *clearness* of Scripture, when spoken or written expositions of its meaning are attempted, or in disparagement of its *method and order*, when, in treatises of systematic theology, an attempt is made to present, in logical sequence and relation, the doctrines of the inspired volume. Why, then, should doctrinal Formularies be held to reflect upon the one or the other? Certain very important practical ends, it is believed, may be subserved by such Formularies, and, in framing and using them, we are merely applying *Scripture itself*, according to our understanding of it, in a certain way; even as in oral or written discourse, founded on Scripture, we do but apply Scripture. If the Formulary is unscriptural, or, if the Sermon or religious Treatise is unscriptural, that is another matter; but the mere fact of arranging and moulding the statements of Scripture, as is done in the Confessions, cannot, we think, be held as in itself dishonouring to the Scriptures.

The Bible does not profess to be a treatise in systematic or logical form. It was given at "sundry times and in divers manners" by men who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" and the popular mould in which it is cast has been chosen, in divine wisdom, to give a value to the "lively oracles" which is far above all completeness in scientific arrangement. Who does not feel the meaning and the value of the Form which God has given to His Word? Who does not perceive that the Scriptures would have come to large classes of men under great disadvantage, had they been given as a systematic treatise? But, whilst recognising, with devout gratitude, the wisdom and goodness of God, in impressing upon His Word the characteristics which it exhibits, the Church does nothing amiss—nothing in forgetfulness of the *form* of Scripture—when, for certain important ends, such as the more ready convincing of gainsayers, or the manifestation of her testimony to the truth, she draws up

and sanctions compends of Scripture doctrine, as in our Confessions of Faith and other doctrinal Symbols.

Never has the Church of Christ been more actuated by reverence for Scripture, never less disposed to substitute anything for it, than at the periods in which our great historical Symbols were drawn up. The members of the Council of Nice, or of the Westminster Assembly, or the framers of the Augsburg Confession, were not men who set little store by Scripture, or would have tolerated any attempt to supersede it, in any of its proper uses, by merely human compositions. Is it not also true that the times in which the Church has kept fast by her Subordinate Standards, are the very times in which the Scriptures have been loved and valued; and that, on the other hand, disesteem of her Confessions, or carelessness about them, has been found to mark the periods in which the Word of God was little prized? How was it, in Scotland and England, during the greater part of last century? How has it been on the Continent of Europe? There is more than accident in this coincidence; and we may confidently appeal to history to shew that the estimation in which the Church has held her Symbolical Books, is not something to be substracted from the reverence and affection due to the Word of God.

We now proceed to point out some of the chief uses of Confessions of Faith, and other Doctrinal Formularies, with special reference to our own Confession, and the Catechisms associated with it.

1. The subordinate standards of the Church are *an important aid in protecting it against error*. We say *important aid*; for no one will claim that they are the only protection against heresy, or even the first in rank, which the Church of Christ enjoys. Surely, in regard to this matter, no means is entitled to take precedence of the faithful preaching of the Word. This is the main instrumentality which God has ordained, at once for the diffusion of the truth, and for the counteraction of perni-

cious error ; and should *it* fail, it were useless to expect that the best Confession should either preserve the vitality of the Church, or be of much service against false doctrine. Again, a place of no little honour should be assigned to the Literature in defence of the truth, which has emanated from the Church in many lands, and in many ages. It is quite impossible to assign to each of these instrumentalities, and to others which might be enumerated, their respective shares in the honour of repelling the assaults of error, and maintaining in its integrity the faith once delivered to the saints ; but we claim that *some* share in this honour is certainly due to the Confessions and Symbols which the Church has, from time to time, adopted. The statement now advanced should not be controverted by any intelligent student of the Church's history. Moreover, the instinctive aversion with which errorists regard Confessions of Faith, testifies that *they* feel them to be an impediment in their way. It will frequently happen that the first indication of unsoundness in doctrine—the first token of proclivity towards error—is the hostility manifested towards those Symbols which express the beliefs held by the Church of Christ in all ages.

We may easily see how doctrinal Formularies, clear and concise in their language, should serve the purpose now referred to. In brief and emphatic terms, little capable of being misinterpreted, they enunciate what God has taught his Church regarding the meaning of His Holy Word. Their very presence in the Church—the very knowledge, on the part of the Church's members, that such formal solemn declarations of the Church's Faith exist, has its influence in regulating belief, and restraining heretical tendencies.

But more especially are these Formularies serviceable in preventing *teachers* in the Church from propagating anything contrary to the truth. For the office-bearers of the Church are supposed, at their induction, to have given their solemn assent to its Standards. Unless, therefore,

their conscience be greatly seared, they will not remain in office, and teach what is contrary to their vows at ordination. Cases will be remembered by any one who has knowledge of those branches of the Church in which confessions have been operative, where teachers who had embraced unsound opinions voluntarily abdicated their position. But, should the errorist not do this, should conscience allow him to disregard altogether, or to give a non-natural meaning to the Symbols he has subscribed, it becomes much easier to bring home the charge of error, and procure his expulsion, than in other circumstances. No dishonour is done to Scripture in making this statement. For while Scripture, in all its great doctrines, is abundantly clear, yet the field of Scripture is very large; and there are statements, in places of it, which the ingenious errorist will have little difficulty in perverting; thus his detection and conviction will be much more difficult, where he has not subjected himself to a test of comparatively easy application. Suppose, e. g., the case of a teacher in the Church charged with denying the divinity of our Lord. If you try his doctrine simply by appeal to the Scriptures, he will, probably, keep his judges at bay for a long time, while he wanders over the whole Bible, and gives and defends his interpretation of the passages—many of them capable of being much perverted—which he is sure to adduce in his favour. It will be difficult to bring his case to an issue. The church Authorities may, indeed, decide that his interpretations of Scripture are illegitimate; or may even enunciate, before he enters on his defence, what the Scriptures *really teach* respecting this momentous doctrine. But this is simply to have an *unwritten* Confession of Faith—an exposition of Scripture understood to be sanctioned as the true one,—and is, surely, less satisfactory than to have some short and clear Symbol which has been deliberately assented to by all. The very excellencies of the Scriptures, their very perfection for the great ends for which they were given, render them, we

may with reverence say, less suitable for *immediate* application to the purpose we are speaking of.

No teacher in a Church possessing a Confession, has any ground for complaining of injustice done him, if his doctrine is brought to the test of a Formulary which he has himself subscribed; and it implies want of candour or of intelligence to raise an outcry when parties are thus dealt with, as if their rights and liberties were overridden by ecclesiastical tyranny.

We have not space to enlarge more upon this use of the Confession. We have been careful not to exaggerate its value in respect to the end spoken of. We have not assigned to Creeds the highest place among the *means* by which God, in His providence, preserves His truth from corruption; and certainly no word has been used which puts Confessions, or anything else which falls under the category of *means*, in the place of the enlightening, life-giving, and purifying presence of the Spirit of God. "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

2. Confessions of Faith are *declarations of the Church's principles*, fitted to be useful to several classes of persons, but especially to *those who are seeking the Fellowship of the Church*. The duty of the Church, in making known her Principles, as well as her Aims, is chiefly discharged, no doubt, by the public preaching of the Word. Even as in regard to the previous point, this agency must be placed first. It cannot be said by any to whom our public religious assemblies are open, that they have no opportunity of learning what we believe concerning the things of God. And, in the declaration of our principles and exhibition of our testimony, preaching is aided, in these latter days, by a varied and abundant religious literature. But yet there is room, may we not say *necessity*, for something more. Many will wish to see some Authoritative Statement, in moderate compass, as to what the Church really holds. We cannot doubt that, when Creeds began to be sanc-

tioned, the Church, amongst other ends to be served by them, contemplated the one of which we now speak. And these ancient Creeds, so far as they went, were adapted to fulfil the purpose mentioned. Who, after reading the Nicene Creed, could have any doubts as to what the Church held concerning the Trinity? Or who could examine the Creed of Chalcedon, and not know what the Church believed concerning the Person of her Lord? Here were the utterances not of an individual member of the Church, howsoever eminent, but the well-considered, formal, solemn testimony of the Church in its collective capacity. What farther was needed, to attest in the most authentic manner, the doctrines and principles on which it rested?

The Church might, indeed, have said to all who impugned her doctrines, or made inquiry regarding them, "Here is a book which we hold to be inspired of God. We believe all that is therein contained. Read it and you will have sufficient knowledge of our doctrines. This is our rule of faith: this is our rule of life." But suppose the assailant or the inquirer to have replied: "We have not leisure to examine this extensive volume, to ascertain its teachings throughout, and to see whether one part of it is always consistent with another. Besides, we wish to know how you *interpret* the book, and what you regard as its scope and drift touching the high questions with which it deals." When thus addressed, would it not be of obvious advantage to be prepared to furnish such a statement of the Church's faith as the Symbols we have referred to contain.

The churches are not now, it is true, surrounded, as in ancient times, with a population in great part ignorant of the very primary truths of religion; and it might seem as if, with respect to the matter referred to, Confessions could *now*, at least, be dispensed with. No person in Christendom, who has any intelligence at all, is ignorant that the Church of Christ holds the doctrines set forth in the

Apostles' Creed. Let us, however, call to mind the circumstances in which the Church finds herself in these later times. The visible Church is now sadly dismembered ; for not only has the East been separated from the West, but Protestantism, in great strength, has seceded from the corrupt Church of Rome ; and the children of the Reformation, also, have not been able to dwell together, but are separated and distinguished by diversities in doctrine, which we cannot always call unimportant. It seems, then, as if in view of this the present state of Christendom, the necessity of churches having their Confessions, were very apparent. Earnest-minded men, who seek intelligently to determine their church connexion, will often desire to know what this or that religious Denomination holds, and wherein it differs from other Bodies which are, perhaps, on the same territory. Now, the churches should be prepared to meet this case, and to put it in the power of every one to examine their position and claims. Those living around us have a right to say to *us*, e. g., " You call yourselves the Presbyterian Church ; you claim, we doubt not, to be, in doctrine, discipline, and worship, according to the New Testament model. We wish to see some authoritative account of what you *do* hold respecting the Faith, Constitution, and Functions of the Church of Christ."

We, as Presbyterians, are always glad to be thus addressed, and have satisfaction in referring all who inquire concerning us, to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. Is it not well, we ask, even for this purpose, that we have our Subordinate Standards ? Would it improve our position should the views of some prevail, and these and similar Documents be cancelled altogether ?

3. Confessions of Faith, by helping to supply the members of the Church with grounds of confidence in their mutual orthodoxy, *become bonds of union and fellowship among them*. In seeking connection with any branch of the Church of Christ, one will desire to know what is be-

lieved by those with whom he is to stand in so close and sacred relations. Should he discover that they differ widely from him in their understanding of the most important doctrines, he can hardly expect to have his edification and comfort promoted, or even, with advantage, to render his personal testimony to the truth, by joining their fellowship. He will be held, we cannot say unjustly, in measure responsible for the soundness in the faith of his fellow church members. The principles of the Society he unites with, and is incorporated into, will be held to be endorsed by him, and its responsibilities assumed by him, in conjunction with his fellow-members. This is the common judgment of mankind, and it is of no little importance that it should be respected. Many branches of the Church have greatly suffered, and many excellent Christian men have had their testimony to the truths of the Gospel much compromised, by the union in church membership of those who held little in common regarding the most important doctrines of Scripture.

But even were one not held, in any measure, responsible for the belief of his Church, must not the comfort and joy of fellowship be greatly impaired where there exists a want of confidence in the doctrinal soundness of those called Christian brethren, or where it is not possible to attain to satisfaction on this point? Many persons, we dare say, will reply to us, that Doctrine has little to do with Fellowship, and that all that is required to mutual confidence and edification is the possession of Christian character and pious feeling on the part of those who are brought together. But is it well, we may ask, thus to separate between Christian character and soundness in the Faith? Is the former likely to escape decay, where the latter is seriously impaired?

Do we, then, expect every member of the Church to subscribe its Formularies, in order to give assurance to his brethren respecting his belief? Is it not too much to demand of all applicants for church membership, that

they shall accept every statement in such a Document, e. g., as the Westminster Confession of Faith? We will readily admit, that there are persons to whom we should not be justified in refusing church membership, although they could not set their hand to the whole doctrine of our excellent Confession. They may not have been able to examine it with sufficient care to give an altogether intelligent assent to it; or there may be subordinate views and matters embraced in the Confession, respecting which some degree of doubt remains with them; yet they are so evidently the Lord's children, and so cordial in their appreciation of evangelical truth, that we should greatly exceed our authority in declining to admit them into our Communion. What is now said is no novelty among us, but is generally admitted and acted upon in the Presbyterian churches; and a distinction is made between the terms on which *office-bearers* of the Church are inducted, and those on which *ordinary members* are received. Nor is there any hardship in requiring of those to be set apart to teach and rule, a fuller declaration of their belief than is necessary in the case of unofficial members—of those asking nothing more than to be recognized as the disciples of Christ.

But, in allowing this distinction, the Church does not abate her testimony nor impair the value of her Standards as a bond of Union among her members. Persons may be received into communion who have not yet seen their way to the full acceptance of everything contained in these Standards, but if the Church is faithful in their admission to fellowship, they hold nothing in contravention of the main principles therein exhibited; and should private members of the Church teach and propagate views inconsistent with the Church's testimony, it is right and necessary that they should be held to account, though they should not have subscribed the Formularies. But the truth is, that if the Church's *teaching* remains sound—if the Pulpit is not uncertain in its utterances—there is, in

ordinary circumstances, little danger of serious error making much progress among the people. It is surely a matter of great consequence, that those joining a communion should have the best guarantees for the character of the *teaching* everywhere heard within it.

The possibility, of course, always exists of a church so falling from the doctrine of her Standards, that these shall become practically obsolete, though never formally set aside. Her standards may be Calvinistic, yet her pulpit frequently Armenian ; her standards distinctly Protestant, her teachings not seldom Romish. And if so, what is the value of Confessions or Articles, as a bond of Union ? How do they serve to regulate Church fellowship ? We reply, that we have been careful not to put Formularies of doctrine in a place which cannot belong to them, nor to attribute to them a power which they cannot exercise. They are not a substitute for the Spirit's presence in the Church, nor for the faithful preaching of the Gospel, nor for faithfulness in the administration of discipline, nor for honesty on the part of ministers and people. But where a church is, on the whole, vital,—where she is disposed in love and fidelity to make her Standards operative, they will prove of real service in securing the unity and harmony of the Church, and inspiring her several parts and members with mutual confidence.

Were we to compare churches which have Confessions and *respect* them, with churches which either have no Confessions or have allowed their Confessions to become a dead letter, we should be struck with the great difference between them as to their consciousness of *unity*—of a common life and Common Responsibility for the condition and action of the Church. In some churches, all that many a pious man seeks is that he shall be allowed to *hold* the truth ; if a minister, to *preach* it, and to regulate his personal conduct in accordance therewith. He hardly thinks of any kind of united action on the part of his Church, in the interest of the truth, as of possible realiza-

tion. He never dreams of responsibility attaching to *himself*, for the attitude in which his Church is found, and the influence she puts forth. If the great majority of his Church's ministers are evangelical and faithful, he is glad; if the contrary, he mourns in private, but hardly feels as if called to do anything more. Now, where this state of things exists, there is serious defect and weakness; the Church is an object of compassion to her friends, and of scorn and derision to her enemies. How different it would be with her did a complete organization, and a persuasive sense and feeling of unity, allow her to put forth her strength, in one direction, for good.

There are again, other Churches—may we not, without offence, name our own, the Presbyterian—in which the Body is far more intimately *one*. Every member of the church is taught to cherish the feeling that he is a part of it, and to realize the responsibility therein involved. Along with all his brethren in communion, he is accountable for the doctrine heard throughout his church, for the administration of discipline, for the action of church courts, for the general procedure of the Body. He, personally, is implicated. He must discharge his duty, in this regard, and keep his conscience clear. He must strive to make his influence, be it great or small, tell upon his Church, to the increase of her strength for good and towards the removal of evil. The general condition of the Church can no more be matter of indifference to him, than the general condition of the body to the eye and the ear, the hand and the foot. If this feeling of responsibility is regulated by intelligence, and accompanied by love of the brethren, it is an element of great strength and value to the Church. How much the Presbyterian Church has been indebted to her sense of a common life! How nobly, at many periods of her history, has she moved as a unit under its influence! And how nobly, too, in times of declension, have faithful Minorities within her pale striven to rectify her doctrine or her policy, and to bring

her back to fidelity and truth ! It would be too much to ascribe all this to her having a common Creed ; but we are very confident that the place which she has given to her Standards, is one of the conditions under which this feeling of a common responsibility, and power of a common life, have been developed. You will not, unless we are greatly mistaken, find these in equal degree in churches which have no Confession, or in which, from whatever cause, Confessions have become a nullity. While the history of Nonconformity in England is, in many respects, extremely honourable, it cannot compare with that of Scotch Presbyterianism, in the matter of developing a healthy Common Life. The Church of England, we fear, illustrates what has been said regarding religious bodies whose standards have ceased to be operative.

4. The subordinate standards of a church *may be valuable guides in the work of religious Instruction*. No end served by such Compositions, can be of greater importance than this. We shall, therefore, dwell upon it with rather greater fulness than has been observed upon any of the previous topics.

The ancient Creeds, the Apostles', Nicene, Chalcedon, Athanasian, were comparatively short, and relate chiefly to *God*. They set forth the Church's belief concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, the divinity of the Son and of the Spirit, and the relations of the Persons in the God-head to each other. The Apostles' Creed, though the briefest, is, perhaps, the most comprehensive of them all. These venerable Symbols do not exhibit, with any detail, the teachings of the Scriptures concerning *man*,—his original holy condition, his state as fallen and under the curse, his state as regenerate. Nor do they furnish any adequate statement of the work of the Son, and the work of the Holy Ghost in redemption. They are narrow in their range, as compared with any one of the Confessions or Formulas originated by the Reformation. It hence arises—not to speak of their brevity—that they had not the value

for purposes of instruction, which belongs to our modern Symbolical writings. Yet, brief as they are, and partial in topic, these ancient Creeds indicate many points which must have prominence in any course of religious instruction. But when we refer to the principal Confessions of the Protestant churches, whether the great Lutheran Symbol, or the Confessions of the Calvinistic side of the Reformation, how admirable they are for their comprehensiveness, as for their arrangements of topics; and how well fitted to become Directories in instruction. Let us speak more especially, in this connexion, of our own standards, and thus give to our remarks a more practical turn. In the Westminster Confession of Faith we have a most excellent *System of Theology*. Hardly any topic is wanting which would enter into a course of instruction, whether for the old or the young, whether for the ordinary learner, or for the scientific student. Compare with it the most elaborate of our great works on Systematic Theology, and you will find the substance of them all in this admirable Compend. Look over the "contents" of our Confession, beginning with the chapter—"Of the Holy Scriptures," and ending with the chapter—"Of the Last Judgment," and tell us what is absent, on which a parent would wish to instruct his children, a minister his people, or even a theological professor his students. And as the work is comprehensive, so its arrangement is good, and its definitions and statements remarkable for clearness and point. All this might, indeed, be expected, when we remember that for four years and a half so many of the most eminent divines of Great Britain, in a period singularly favoured with pious and eminent divines, were assiduously engaged in the compilation of our Standards. It results from our Confession possessing in so high degree the qualities mentioned, that it must be of great use, as a guide to those who conduct courses of religious instruction. All the main topics are here given; the territory to be occupied, carefully mapped out; and there should be

little difficulty on the part of the intelligent instructor, who follows the Confession, in expanding and illustrating, as far as may be requisite to make his teaching practically effective. We are not here speaking of a thing which has never been attempted; and suggesting a use of the Confession not contemplated by its compilers, nor thought of by the generations of our fathers, who have had this book in their possession. Many a course of instruction, given from the pulpit, has kept the Confession steadily in view;—not to its detriment in point of originality and force, and greatly to its advantage, in respect to fulness and method;—securing also a proper relative prominence in the treatment of the several truths and principles of Revelation. We, by no means, say that the exposition of the Confession of Faith, should be, for us Presbyterians, the true idea of preaching; but we cannot refrain from stating our opinion, that when such an aid in the ordering of instruction is quite disregarded, Preaching, in many instances, will suffer loss. The *tone* of the book, we may also say, is admirable; and very refreshing it is to turn away from many treatises which have been reproduced in sensational pulpit discourses, to the calm, reverent, conscientious, and withal thoroughly evangelical statements of divine truth, which the Confession lays before us.

But it is not for the pulpit alone that the Confession has value as a Guide or Directory, in ordering courses of instruction. It might obviously be referred to with much advantage, in teaching classes of young persons; and at a time when so much attention is wisely bestowed by ministers and others upon this department of work, it is well that the Confession should be drawn upon, as far as it may furnish assistance.

When, however, the question of the Standards, in their relation to instruction, is before us, the *Catechisms* at once come into prominence. For the very purpose of serving as “Directories” in the instructing of “those who are of weaker capacity,” and of “such as have made some pro-

ficiency in the knowledge of the grounds of religion," were the Catechisms agreed upon.

The *doctrine* of the Catechism, it is superfluous to say, is the same as that of the Confession ; and while several topics treated of in the Confession are omitted in the Catechisms, the arrangement is substantially the same.

With respect to the Shorter Catechism, it is spoken of by all who are not opposed to the doctrine of our subordinate Standards, with nearly unqualified praise. This praise is unquestionably merited ; but it behoves us to see that words of compliment become not a substitute for *diligence in the use* of the Catechism. Few of the members of our church, who are heads of families, would think it right, we hope, to disuse the catechism in the instruction of their households. It would be hard, indeed, to find any Manual for catechising which could advantageously replace it. We mention the following features of the Shorter Catechism as admirably qualifying it to serve the purpose for which it was compiled :—1. *Its comprehensiveness.* The Shorter Catechism comprises everything regarding the facts and principles of the Christian Faith, which we need to teach the younger members of our families. We have stated that some matters found in the Confession are left out of the Catechisms ; and it will be admitted that while these matters are properly enough embraced in the Confession, they are, with equal propriety, omitted in the Catechisms. The Confession of Faith has chapters on "Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience," on "Marriage and Divorce," on the "Civil Magistrate," on "Synods and Councils ;" now it is evidently not necessary that the Catechisms should contain anything equivalent to these chapters. But the most rapid analysis of the Shorter Catechism will shew what a variety of topics is found in it, and how completely the ground necessary to be occupied, is surveyed and taken possession of. After the two introductory questions, touching the "Chief End of man," and the "Rule given to direct

us, how we may glorify and enjoy Him," the Catechism proceeds:—"What do the Scriptures principally teach?" The answer indicates the method of the book: "The Scriptures principally teach *what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.*" This is the simple two-fold division of its contents. Under the *first* general head we have such topics as these;—The Trinity; the decrees of God; creation and Providence; man's original condition; man's condition as fallen; God's purpose of mercy; the Redeemer—divine and human—prophet, priest and king; the work of the Spirit in the application of redemption; the benefits of redemption, whether in this life—justification, adoption, sanctification,—or in the life to come—perfect blessedness in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity. Under the *second* head we have a careful analysis and exposition of the Ten Commandments, as a summary of the Moral Law. Then the duties of Faith and Repentance are explained. Finally, the ordinary Means of Grace are treated of,—the hearing of the Word, the Sacraments, and Prayer.

No one is likely to complain of the omission of topics on which our youth should be catechised. On the contrary, some are offended (we speak of those who agree with the Doctrine of the catechism) with the introduction of certain points, which they think should be presented only to a maturer class of persons than those for whose benefit the Shorter Catechism was specially prepared. Thus, objection has been taken to the Catechism for containing anything respecting the *decrees of God*. Some have used even strong terms in condemnation of the impropriety of bringing so high a subject before the minds of children. But we might ask whether there is any statement in the Catechism regarding the decrees of God which cannot safely fall into the hands of those who are supposed to read the Scriptures?

What does the Catechism say? "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His

will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass ;” and again, “ God having, out of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of an estate of sin and misery, and bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.” Now we may well ask, whether, if it be improper to bring such words before children, it be not required, that in reading the Scriptures, children should keep their Bibles closed at such passages as the following : “ According as He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before Him, in love : having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.”

The Catechism enters into no speculations of human philosophy regarding this high theme : it aims merely at stating, in the plainest words, the teaching of the Bible ; and if it has erred in introducing this matter, its mode of presenting the whole subject of the Covenant of Grace—of the work of redemption—would need to be greatly different. The truth is, that there is little difference between the Child and the Man, in regard to ability to comprehend what the Catechism says, or what the Bible says, about the Decrees of God and Predestination. Besides the faith of the Church should never transcend, on this or any other matter, the plain teachings of Scripture ; and if, in our statements regarding the divine fore-ordination, Scripture be closely adhered to, we can see no good reason why the Catechism should observe an entire silence on a subject to which the Scriptures so often and so plainly make reference.

But in making these remarks, we find ourselves defending the Catechism, against the charge of being *too* comprehensive—not the reverse. We may suppose it, therefore, on all hands, admitted, that the Catechism embraces everything which should be found in such a Manual.

2. The catechism presents a *good and orderly Arrangement of its topics*. The proof of this has been already exhibited, and need not be repeated in the present connexion. There are, as might be expected, different views as to the best order of presenting systematically, the doctrines of the Christian Religion. The discussion of this difficult question would, however, be altogether out of place in an Essay of the present character. Suffice it to say, that, while some very eminent men have preferred another starting-point, and manner of development, the order adopted by the Catechisms and the Confession of Faith, is the one most generally followed by writers on Systematic Theology. To those who have studied some of the more lengthened works on this science, it seems very admirable that, in a book of a few pages, it should have been possible to condense so much matter, whilst giving to it a form and symmetry not surpassed by the largest and most approved treatises.

Now it is hardly necessary to dwell upon the importance of good arrangement in a manual of this kind. All that might be said in favour of an orderly manner of handling any complex and important subject, would be relevant here. A proper ordering of topics carries the mind along naturally and pleasurably, is a great aid to the memory, and secures that one point shall throw light upon another. Those who may at any time have given instruction according to catechisms inferior to the Shorter in arrangement, will understand and appreciate the excellence here claimed for it. But in pleading for the use of the Shorter Catechism by parents and other instructors of the young among ourselves, it is superfluous to compare it with any other catechism: for the choice will lie, practically, between it and *none*. But when the merits of the Catechism are under discussion at all, it deserves to be said, that no catechism of any church, as far as we know, excels it in exact and beautiful order.

3. The shorter catechism is *characterised by Depth*. We

are quite aware that many regard this feature of it as a serious disadvantage, rather than a point of merit. Reference has already been made to the charge brought against it of introducing topics which had better be omitted: very generally, the same parties who blame it on this ground, would censure it as being also too profound for the young; as well as too hard and technical in its language. In offering a word of vindication, we assume that the Shorter Catechism is not of necessity the very first catechism used in the instruction of children. There are several excellent little catechisms of a more primary kind, which may well go before it. But, granting this, it is still urged that the Shorter Catechism is deep and technical enough for the professed theologian, and altogether too difficult for the young,—certainly not suited to those who are of “weaker capacity.” This objection to the catechism is a very plausible one, and is thought to have force by many who are not ill-disposed towards our Standards. We are convinced, however, that the Catechism has erred on the safer side. It is far better that our children should have upon their memory definitions and statements a little in advance of them when first learned, than that in after years they should find that their catechism, laboriously committed, is too primary—too juvenile, to be of much value as a permanent possession. These precious seeds deposited in the soil, while yet the season appears too early for growth, will in due time spring up, and yield abundant increase. It is a mistake to suppose that all the instruction communicated to children, all the definitions they commit to memory, all the views and principles given them, should be exactly on a level with their mental development; and should contain no element, which may unfold and fructify as they grow towards maturity. No intelligent Presbyterian is ashamed to recall the words of his Catechism when he reaches manhood. If pious, as well as intelligent, he will say to you, that these words grow upon him in truth and

depth, the more he reflects upon them. Yea, many an aged believer among us revolves in his mind with a delight second only to that with which the words of Inspiration are remembered, definitions and answers treasured up in early youth.

We are persuaded that the Depth and Thoroughness of the catechism are among its excellencies; and as to any terms or expressions which are technical or compact, these can, in almost every case, be rendered intelligible, even to pretty young persons, by the competent instructor. It is hard, indeed, to see how the truths of the Bible can be taught at all, without employing terms which some would stigmatize as technical; and, certainly, on this ground, the Scriptures, themselves, have often been found fault with.

4. We observe, still again, that the Shorter Catechism, in common with the other parts of our church's standards, is *profoundly evangelical*. It is clear and decisive in its teachings on the doctrines of grace, and all that relates to the way of the sinner's acceptance with God. How entirely in accord with Scripture in regard to the work of the Son, and the work of the Spirit! How true to the deepest and most genuine experience! There is not a frigid expression respecting Christ and his Work to be found in the Catechism; and there is not a word savouring either of Legalism or of Antinomianism. Where so much is quite to the purpose, it may be difficult to select; but we would quote the following questions, with their answers, as preeminently illustrating the statements now made. "Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery? God having out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of Grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation, by a Redeemer." Here salvation is represented to be wholly of grace; it originates in the sovereign, benevolent will of God. The whole

plan and work of God ; and an exhibition of his infinite love and mercy.

Again : "How doth Christ execute the office of a Priest? Christ executes the office of a Priest in his once offering up himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God ; and in making continual intercession for us." No concession here to any of the theories which vacate the atonement of Christ ; and ascribe to repentance, or to good works, or to the mere assumption of humanity by the Saviour, what is due to his sacrificial death. The death of Christ is a sacrifice—the expiation of guilt ; and the great object in presenting this sacrifice is to harmonize justice and mercy, in God's acceptance of the sinner. Thus God is seen to be "just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."

We must not omit to quote the answer to the question, "What is effectual calling?" "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel." Are not all the steps by which God brings us to himself set down here? set down as only men could do who had acquaintance at once with the word of God and with the operation of God's Spirit upon the human heart. The Spirit is here honoured, even as the Son when his work is spoken of ; and as the Saviour had no assistance in procuring the blessings of salvation, so it is the Spirit's undivided work and prerogative to put us in possession of them. The Spirit "enables and disposes." He makes us willing in the day of God's power : he works in us both to will and to do. There is nothing here in contradiction of what the Scriptures teach as to our *duty* to believe in Christ, and the *activity* of the human soul in believing ; while He who anticipates us in this matter, and originates in us all that is good, receives the honour.

Not to multiply references to the Catechism, we may

simply point to the account given of Justification, and also of Faith and Repentance. And while salvation is thus seen to be entirely of grace, there is not only no approach to Antinomianism, but there is the clearest exhibition of the Law of God, as the Rule of obedience to the believer and to all men.

Having spoken thus at length of the Shorter Catechism, we shall not enlarge upon the merits or the abuses of the *Larger*. Its high and varied excellencies are admitted by all who have made it a careful study ; and whenever any Presbyterian is heard speaking lightly of the Larger Catechism, you are probably correct in judging that he has but an imperfect acquaintance with it.

This catechism will be found very useful for several purposes, and especially as a Guide or Help in conducting advanced classes of young persons. In many bible-classes the Scriptures and the Larger Catechism are the textbooks, and are found amply sufficient. It is extraordinary how much matter is packed into some of its Answers. Then all is pervaded by a remarkable wisdom, making it extremely valuable not only in teaching the young, but also for reference, by Christian persons of all ages, in cases where direction is sought for the life or the conscience. A single citation will suffice for illustration here. Could anything be wiser, more faithful and more tender, than the answers to these two questions : "What is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in the time of the administration of it?" and "What is the duty of Christians after they have received the Lord's Supper?" We do not give the answers, which are considerably long ; but only beg of those who allow themselves to speak of the Larger Catechism as obsolete and useless, to ponder these and many other Answers in this book, and then say whether their judgment upon the Catechism does not need to be revised.

We know how, in past ages, the Catechisms were esteemed and used by ministers and parents in the Presby-

terian Church ; nor were the Nonconformists of England and New England behind Presbyterians, for a long time, in their appreciation of the Catechisms, and their assiduity in the use of them. Our Congregational brethren have now very generally, we suppose, allowed the Westminster Catechisms, as also their own Modifications of the Westminster Confession, to fall into disuse among them. With respect to *ourselves*, we have not perhaps sufficient data to compare, quite justly, the present with the past. There may occasionally be fears that the comparison would not be favourable to our own time. But in any case, let parents, and all others charged with the solemn and responsible duty of giving religious instruction to the young, “suffer the word of exhortation ;” let them prosecute their high work with still more prayerful diligence ; and let them not neglect to employ, or dream of throwing aside, a help so valuable as the Shorter Catechism. We greatly fear that where Presbyterians have discontinued the use of the Shorter Catechism, this is to be attributed either to aversion to its doctrine, or to a spirit of carelessness about the work in which the catechism was meant to give assistance. Let us tremble at the thought of being found unfaithful in a matter so important as the religious training of our children—a matter on which the prosperity, nay the very existence, of the Church of Christ among us may be said to depend.

And now, in bringing this Essay to a close, we wish to add a word respecting the obligation which rests upon our own and the other Branches of the Church of Christ, to regard with due appreciation those Statements and Definitions of the great scriptural truths which have come down to us, some of them from an early period in the Church’s history. We shall, certainly, err if we throw these definitions, in a body, contemptuously aside. They are, no doubt, human ; we never claim for them an equality with the Holy Scriptures. But they are, generally, the fruit of much study, consultation and prayer in the

Church. And while we keep away from the impious Romish doctrine of the Church's Infallibility, we shall not deny, surely, that the Spirit of God, in accordance with the Saviour's promise, has been the Teacher of his people; and that, moreover, in the providence of God certain great truths of Scripture have been brought—now one, now another—with peculiar clearness before the mind of his Church, so that she has been able to express and formulate these for coming ages. Is it not well then that we should conserve the inheritance which has come down to us? Is it wise, is it modest, is it quite consistent with due recognition of the Spirit's presence in the Church, unceremoniously to reject all that she offers as of the fruit of her toil, in working out the meaning and harmony of the great Christian doctrines, as declared in the holy Word.

Our age is restless, no doubt, and given to change, and one token of this characteristic is the eagerness which many shew to have the Church set free from the restraint of Confessions and of Doctrinal Formularies altogether. It is of little use, we know, to meet the tendencies of the period in which our lot is cast, with language of general censure and denunciation. We must try to understand our age, to sympathize with it under its difficulties, and to lead it gently onwards, if possible, to greater security and peace. It would be quite a mistake, therefore, to treat any temperate suggestions for improving our Formularies in minor matters, or for giving them special adaptation to the exigencies of our own age, as betraying an unwillingness to submit to the truth of God, or a desire to alter essentially the Faith of the Church. It is not necessarily a sacrilegious thing to speak of *revising* our Subordinate Standards; and we must never speak or act in regard to them as if the epithet *subordinate* were not correctly used to designate them. But if men wish to have them cast aside, that each one may be free to believe and to teach whatever he pleases, or to have them fundamentally

revised in the interests of Modern Unbelief, it is obvious that such demands and such a spirit must be resisted at all hazards. The practical difficulties in the way of frequent periodic revision, even in a right spirit, are very great, if not insuperable ; and we could by no means regard it as a wise thing to follow the example of the Reformed French Church, in its early history, in reviewing our Confession every four years. Providence will, no doubt, open the way for Revision when it becomes really a matter of importance to the Church that it should take place.

Truly, the Presbyterian Church has got many Legacies of great value, and amongst these we are entitled to number her Subordinate Standards. It were easy to shew that her standards have rendered important service to her in many periods and crises of her history. We, as Presbyterians, shall show ourselves little thankful if we forget all this. But the great security against all attempts to displace the Standards—the principal means of allaying the desire for a doctrinal freedom which the Standards will not allow—is to cherish an earnest love of those great scriptural truths, the full and uncompromising exhibition of which is their most prominent characteristic. Let us “buy the truth and sell it not.” Let us “hold fast the faithful word even as we have been taught.” “Let the word of God dwell in us richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”; and then shall we know how to reserve for the Book “given by inspiration of God,” a place which no merely human composition may share with it ; whilst retaining, in due respect and honour, Symbols so truly scriptural in doctrine and tone as the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. It would be a serious evil if the Presbyterian Church should fail in catholicity of spirit and practice ; for it really seems as if, in the present time, it were largely entrusted to her to represent, in her Doctrinal Basis and in her practice and sympathies, the Unity of the Church of Christ ; but it would be an

evil of still more appalling magnitude should we ever waver in our attachment to the Doctrines of Grace, and in our love of those great Evangelical Principles which our Church has been so much honoured to uphold and propagate. May we and all the churches of the Saints "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."





CANADA

Presbyterian Church Pulpit.

BY REV. DAVID INGLIS, LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, KNOX COLLEGE, TORONTO.

THE ATONEMENT :

ITS NECESSITY, ITS REALITY, AND ITS NATURE.



SOME years ago, during the war between the Northern and Southern States, the use of bank notes was largely superseded in Canada by silver coins of the United States. These coins were generally put up in paper parcels, purporting to amount to a certain value, which was marked upon them; these were frequently sealed up, and they passed in payment from one person to another without the tedious process of counting out their contents to see that they contained the sum for which they passed current. There was here obviously room for error or fraud. The parcels so passed might be taken for a certain sum when they contained a less; or, indeed, they might not contain a single genuine coin. So in regard to theological words, the words may be retained and may pass current, where the essential principles of the doctrine have been tampered with or altogether repudiated. Sermons on the Atonement are not unfrequently preached and pub-

lished, which contain no definite doctrinal statements, or which maintain views wholly subversive of the great truths of God's word. It is of vital importance to preserve the doctrine of vicarious atonement, as against those words of indefinite signification in the fair sound of which the truth of God is subverted, those forms of speech which seem designed only to conceal thought, and those resemblances to the form of sound words, in which actual antagonism to this great doctrine are expressed. We may quote the words of Dr. John Owen, as adapted to the exigencies of theological literature in the present day: "But whatever the ends of men are, or their interest in defaming the wisdom, sovereignty and grace of God, the Lord's ends in permitting them are holy and good, and we are assured that he would not have suffered these dangerous errors to invade His church, and His glorious truth to be so contumeliously treated, but to their further illustration and conquest."

We do not purpose anything like a systematic treatise on the great doctrine of the Atonement, but rather we aim at a brief statement of the teachings of God's Word, which, without being, properly speaking, controversial, may yet be effective as meeting some of the current speculations which have led to serious perversions of the truth. We desire, as far as possible, to deal with the scriptural statements of the doctrine, leaving the refutation of errors to come in the way of inferences from the truths so presented.

At the very outset we are met with the question as to

THE NECESSITY OF THE ATONEMENT.

Salvation is often represented as a thing which God has but to will, and it is done. God, it is said, has only in the way of Sovereign right, or of divine charity, to give up His own claims—to resolve that he will not be angry with His children, and who shall hinder or gainsay it. This view overlooks the fact that both scripture and reason

unite in giving us views of the ever blessed God, as the Universal Sovereign, whose administration is regulated by eternal rectitude, and the love of holiness, justice and truth. Every representation of the love or mercy of God which in any way involves the idea that God is indifferent to sin, is dishonouring to Him. He is infinitely righteous. "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His Throne." Man, as a sinner, cannot stand before God, and the holy One cannot receive man as a sinner, without a full satisfaction. The words of Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians not only assert the necessity of an atonement, but they do so in language which implies that no other method, even in the plenitude of divine power, could have been adopted by which God could justify the sinner. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law; but the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."—Gal. iii, 21, 22.

The necessity of the atonement is sometimes received as a necessity merely of policy or government, and the atonement itself as simply designed to meet certain exigencies in God's moral government, lest the authority of His law should be disparaged or weakened, thus resolving it into a mere expedient to prevent the evils of absolute forgiveness. This view overlooks the fact that God's righteous government and immutable law with its sanctions and penalties are based on the divine perfections, and those who adopt it look exclusively to the moral impression which it is fitted to make on the minds of God's intelligent creatures. The true end of the divine government is to promote the glory of God—to manifest the attributes which adorn and exalt his character. The law of God is not the dictate of policy, it is the necessary emanation from the divine perfections; its immutability rests on His essential and unchangeable perfections, as holy, and just, and good; hence in the divine government

punishment is not a mere expedient to prevent the progress of rebellion, it is the just expression of God's hatred of iniquity. On this ground we maintain that God cannot receive the sinner into His favour without full satisfaction of His justice. The holiness, righteousness and truth of God can suffer no eclipse to meet any emergency. God must be God whatever may befall His creatures.

In saying that God cannot forgive sin without a full satisfaction of His justice, we do not impeach the divine power. The power of God is co-equal with his will, and His will is determined by the perfections of His nature. To say that there are things which God cannot do, is just to assert that they are inconsistent with the perfections of His being, as when it is said that "He cannot lie." Thus the necessity of atonement rests ultimately on the fact that God's attributes of justice, righteousness and holiness, being infinitely perfect, can admit of no abatement.

If the principles of God's government, springing necessarily from the perfections of His nature and His relations to His creatures, are thus fixed and immutable, is the sinner therefore shut up to despair? Is there no hope for the guilty? Blessed be God that man's ruin has brought to light the riches of God's mercy and the resources of His wisdom, which have overruled man's sin to a higher display of the divine glory. This brings us to the great fact that God "hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."—(2 Cor., v, 21.) Here we have the glorious truth that God has provided a surety, and we propose briefly to consider, in some of its most important aspects,

THE REALITY OF THE ATONEMENT.

The plan of redemption was not an expedient to meet an unforeseen emergency. Man's rebellion had been anticipated in the counsels of eternity, and the plan of redemption had been pre-arranged. The mission of Christ was the out-flowing of God's love to the world.—

(John iii, 16.) It was by the will of God he came.—(Heb. x, 9.) It was by the determinate counsel of God that he was delivered to death.—(Acts ii, 23.) There is a strong foundation for the repose of faith in the fact that it is God who willed and determined the work of Christ. Believing this we cannot but rejoice,—all fear of imperfection or failure being removed:

“ His purpose and His plan he keeps,
Treads all my reasonings down;
He takes me out of nature's deeps,
He hides me in his own.”

In the eternal covenant of redemption, Christ was designated and anointed to be the surety of His people.—(John vi, 39.) And it is in this light that He is ever presented to us in the word of God; it is in this light that we are called to view His incarnation, and His whole work of humiliation.

By the fact of His incarnation, He holds the relation of a common nature to those whose surety He is, and at the same time he is very God, equal with the Father. It gives us assurance of powers equal to the mighty work of saving sinners, to know that it is God Himself who hath stood forth to save us. The truth of Christ's divinity is as essential to the doctrine of the atonement as the truth of His humanity. A mere man could not act the part of surety, he has no power to offer his own life, but Jesus, as the God-man could say, “I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again.”—(John x, 18.) The sufferings of Christ were of such measure and intensity as mere humanity could not have sustained. The divine nature of Christ did not suffer, and could not—only in His manhood could there be suffering,—but the incarnation of the Son of God gave to His humanity an unmeasured power of endurance which enabled Him to bear, what must be borne, the infinitude of God's wrath against sin. In Him the strength of godhead was so allied with our humanity that, when the infinite wrath for

a world's guilt was laid upon Him, it was met by infinite power of endurance. Further, His godhead gives His sufferings unlimited value. The sufferings of a mere man could have no atoning value ; but it comes home with irresistible power to our minds, that the divine dignity of Christ gives infinite value to His obedience and death. We can set no bounds to the worth of Christ's atonement because of the dignity of His person as God. It was because Christ was God as well as man that He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.—(Heb. ix, 26.)

The reality of the atonement is a fundamental doctrine, taught in various ways and in innumerable passages of God's Word. It was ordained, as we have seen, in the eternal counsels of the God of all grace ; and God has been from the beginning foreshadowing it, It was implied in the first promise to fallen man. (Gen. iii. 15.) It was acknowledged in the accepted offering of Abel. (Gen. iv. 4.) It was elaborately interwoven in every part of the Jewish economy, and the typical sacrifices specially foreshadowed it. All the prophets proclaimed it. The New Testament testifies to it in every page. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is an enduring commemoration of it—the cup is the New Testament in Christ's blood shed for the remission of sins.

In speaking of the reality of the atonement, the fact must not be overlooked that the whole life of Jesus Christ on earth was a sin-bearing life. His was a sinless life, yet it had for its aim and scope at every step to fulfil the divine law by a course of active obedience, and to satisfy divine justice by vicarious sufferings. Nor must these two things be separated, as though up to a certain point in His life he rendered obedience to the law actively, and then leaving active obedience behind, entered upon His work of passive obedience. The two together are the very warp and woof of His whole life, and are inseparable. As he approached the cross the cloud of wrath gathered blackness. He suffered from the hands of men instigated by

Satan. (Luke xxii. 53.) But He suffered also from God—"it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." This overshadowed all the rest. In the garden of Gethsemane, for a moment, it seemed as though He recoiled from the bitter cup, when He cried, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me." But He had come, according to the eternal counsels, to manifest the glory of the Father, to accomplish His will, and to effect the salvation of His people, and, therefore, the words were immediately added. "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Matt. xxvi, 39.) How shall we speak of the hiding of His Father's face from Him when upon the cross? His soul was left desolate, and that utterance of intensest agony that ever issued from human lips, was drawn forth—"My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" The light of that countenance, in which He had from everlasting rejoiced, was hid from Him, because He, the sinless and Holy One, stood in the room of sinners. When all was fulfilled, He, "through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God." He cried, with a loud voice, "IT IS FINISHED," and gave up His life. "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." This was a significant announcement of the perfection of the work of Christ. It declared, in language symbolical, but most emphatic, that Heaven, as represented by the sanctuary, is open to all who come in the name of Jesus. As soon as He died the veil was rent. Its immediateness intimates God's delight in the completion of the work. The veil was rent, not partially but thoroughly; not from the bottom upwards, as though it might have been done by the hand of man, but "from the top to the bottom," by the hand of God himself.

The resurrection of Christ was a further attestation of God's acceptance of the sacrifice. On Jesus, our sin-bearer, our sins were laid, and laden with them He went to the cross. Unless the sins which He bore had been put away, the grave would have held Him, as its rightful

prey. But Christ is risen from the dead, the victim is the victor, and in viewing Christ as risen, exalted, glorified and enthroned, we have the assurance of the full acceptance of the sacrifice that has been offered—"He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

Upon the great historical facts of the incarnation, the life of holy obedience, the death upon the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension of the Lord Jesus, rests our assurance of the reality of the atonement. The sublime ideas of the incarnation and death of the Son of God could only have originated in the mind of Him who is "wonderful in counsel;" and the great facts of Christ's life can only be explained by the doctrine, explicitly stated by the Word of God, that "He, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself to God." He has conquered death by dying, and is now on the throne "our Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Great, indeed, is this mystery of godliness, but it is as glorious as it is great. Well may we glory in the cross—our peace comes through the blood of the cross; our holiness from its power; our hope from the death there accomplished; our glory from its shame; our heaven from its agony.

Having thus briefly directed attention to the necessity and reality of the atonement, let us enter upon our remaining inquiry as to

THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT.

The truth, in reference to the nature of the atonement, is generally expressed by the word *vicarious*. This term is used to gather up the import of those Scriptural expressions which represent Christ as our substitute. He "was made a curse for us." (Gal. iii. 13.) He was "made to be sin for us." (2 Cor. v. 21.) He "was once offered to bear the sins of many." (Heb. ix. 28.) He "hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." (Isaiah liii. 4, 5.) It is obvious that in these

and many similar passages, Jesus Christ is represented not merely as suffering on our behalf, as a teacher, a friend, a helper, or an example. In this view of Christ's relation to the sinner, the effect of His obedience unto death is represented as wholly moral; it is, we are told, such an exhibition of love, of benevolence, of obedience, and of self-sacrifice, that it tends to subdue the enmity of the human heart to God, draws men to Him, gives them the example of a self-sacrificing submission, and stimulates them to a self-denying life. But all this excludes every idea of anything like an atonement. This theory sets aside the demands of justice, and overlooks the inviolable sanctity which attaches to the divine laws. It no less signally fails to meet the wants of an awakened conscience, and to lay a foundation for the repose of faith and the assurance of hope. The expressions "atonement," "vicarious sacrifice," and even "substitution" may be retained, but the things that these terms represent are set aside and subverted.

Others represent the sacrifice of Christ as vicarious in the sense that He identified Himself with our fallen state, and by His sufferings unto death, gave an impressive exhibition of the righteousness of God and of the evil of sin, and thus He has opened up a channel through which blessing may flow to all, on their repentance and faith. According to this view, Christ neither suffered the penalty of the law, nor made any satisfaction to the divine justice. His death was designed to be merely an exhibition of God's displeasure against sin, to convince the universe that He will not allow it to go unpunished. The Scriptures afford no warrant for this theory, and we fail to conceive how a mere exhibition can accomplish the design here ascribed to it. Only on the ground of a definite and adequate satisfaction can God's justice be maintained in the forgiveness and acceptance of the sinner. The atonement was a forensic transaction. Christ took the sinner's place, and made a full legal satisfaction for sin. This is often misrepresented, as though it involved the

ideas that Christ became a sinner for sinners, and that enduring the penalty of the law, included the suffering of remorse and despair. We need not waste time in repudiating all such ideas. The truth on the subject may be briefly stated thus:—Jesus Christ is presented to us as the propitiatory substitute for sinners. Voluntarily, and in accordance with the Divine appointment, He made satisfaction for sin, not only by rendering a perfect obedience to the law, but also by submitting to sufferings so awful that no finite mind can adequately conceive them. As the surety and substitute of His people He answered for them to the offended Lawgiver. Their sins were sinlessly but truly laid upon him. The death of Christ is the real infliction of the threatened curse upon the surety. When we consider that the man who suffered is the Son of the Highest, the Eternal and well-beloved Son of God, thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, who, though not naturally a servant nor under the law, yet took on Him the form of a servant, was made under the law, and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross, it becomes a self-evident truth, carrying conviction to the mind of every man in his senses, that this atonement possesses all the preciousness of the Infinite, all the virtue of the Omnipotent. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and therefore all He did and suffered for us possesses the infinite value of His Divine nature, and His death under the judgment of God as our substitute, renders a fuller satisfaction to the insulted majesty of God, than if the whole race of transgressors had perished eternally.

These views of the nature of the atonement are confirmed, when we consider this doctrine in its relation to Christ's priestly office. The priestly office itself is the foundation of the other Mediatorial offices. It is His office as a prophet to reveal the glory of His priesthood. The sceptre which He wields as a King He won as a Priest. His priestly office has God for its object. Every

High priest taken from among men is ordained for men, *in things pertaining to God* (Heb. v. 1.) As a prophet, He reveals to us the will of God for our salvation. As a King He subdues us to Himself, rules over and defends us. But as a Priest, He offers the sacrifice *to God* for us. Our Lord appeared as a Priest, ordained of God to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. ix. 26). In this capacity He hath made peace by the blood of His cross, and by that blood hath obtained eternal redemption for us. (Col. i. 20 ; Heb. ix. 12.) The death of Christ was not a mere passive endurance on His part. He "laid down His life ;" "He gave Himself ;" and this implies not merely that His death was voluntary, but also that there was the positive forthputting of priestly agency and power. "He offered Himself ;" and this gives wondrous glory to the cross, and wondrous preciousness to these last words, "IT IS FINISHED." The death of Christ then is not a mere example and martyrdom ; nor will the notions of self-denial or self-sacrifice, or that of moral influence, or that of mere governmental display accord with the Scriptural doctrine of Christ's priesthood in its relation to His death. As a priestly act, it is an expiation, a satisfaction, a vicarious offering of Himself for His people.

This view of atonement is further the foundation of all right views of Christ's intercession. Our Lord's intercession is not the exercise of an influence upon a reluctant mind. It is the presentation of a righteous plea to the effect that, in obedience to His Father's will, He has borne the sin of His people. His atonement being definite, perfect, finished and accepted, His intercession is the presentation of it as an efficacious all-prevailing plea. On this ground God, acting as a Judge, receives the sinner, and accepts him as righteous.

This view alone meets the requirements of an awakened conscience. Our consciences recognise the character of God as Judge, and the enlightened conscience longs for

the remission of sins, for the removal of guilt. The atonement of Christ in all its glorious reality and infinite value can alone give security and peace. God is just when He justifies the ungodly ; nay more, God's justice is never so strikingly illustrated as when, for Christ's sake, He justifies the sinner.

There is a peculiar delight to the believer in contemplating the Divine perfections as they are unfolded in the atonement. The righteousness, truth and love of God are seen in their perfect harmony. None of the Divine perfections suffer an eclipse to meet an emergency. Not only is the honour of God vindicated, all His attributes are magnified and displayed in brighter glory than ever. Redemption is the outflowing of God's love to ruined man. The doctrine of the atonement is sometimes so stated as to obscure this—as though Christ had purchased God's love. Oh! that men would learn that Christ is the expression of the love of God, that it was because God so loved us that Christ died to make an expiation for sin, which has opened up a way through which the love of God might reach us, and confer upon us the richest blessings. Equally injurious is it to speak of the love of God in such a way as to represent Him as indifferent to sin. God is infinitely and unchangeably righteous. In the atonement of Christ, righteousness has had its course, the broken law has been fulfilled, and its full curse has fallen on the sinner's substitute. The atonement is the witness of the righteousness of God, and that in such a way as to exalt His love. Where besides have we such a manifestation of God's just abhorrence of sin? The sacrifice of Christ meets all the claims of God, and enables Him, without a stain upon His perfections, to receive sinners who believe in Jesus, and place them beside Him on the Throne. Not only is the character of God untarnished in doing so, but, so far as we can judge, His perfections could not in any other way have been so gloriously displayed. Thus a rich revenue of glory accrues

to God, while salvation—free, full, present salvation, is proclaimed to the sinner. The only true rest and satisfaction for the soul is in Christ and His work. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” The only warrant and support of faith is the Word of God. It is not simply the doctrine of the atonement that we are warranted to present ; it is Christ Himself, a living Saviour, able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him. Faith is not our Saviour, but Christ is, in whom our faith rests.





CANADA

Presbyterian Church Pulpit.

BY REV. WILLIAM GREGG, M.A.,

PROFESSOR OF APOLOGETICS IN KNOX COLLEGE, TORONTO.

BAPTISM: ITS USES, MODE, SUBJECTS, AND DUTIES.



AMONG the outward and divinely-instituted means of grace, there are some which have two peculiarities. *First*, they are visible signs, representing to the eye certain facts and doctrines, which are taught in the Word; and, *Secondly*, they are covenant seals, exhibiting God's promises to His people, and their allegiance to Him. To this class of ordinances the name *Sacraments* is given. This word is not found in the Scriptures, but is used as a convenient term for designating those outward means of grace, which possess the peculiarities of being visible signs and covenant seals. There were two sacraments in Old Testament times—Circumcision, the visible sign of regeneration, and the seal of God's covenant revealed to Abraham; and the Passover, the visible sign of salvation by atoning blood, and spiritual nourishment through faith in Christ, and also a seal of God's covenant with Israel. These sacraments of the Old Testament

have been superseded in the Christian dispensation by baptism, which is the circumcision of Christ ; and by the Lord's Supper, which is the New Testament Passover. On the special consideration of the Sacrament of Baptism, we now prepare to enter, hoping to present such views of it as may, by God's blessing, prove helpful to enquirers on this subject. There are four questions which may be asked respecting this sacrament, viz., I., What are the **USES** of baptism? II., What is the proper **MODE** of administering it? III., Who may be baptized, or, who are the proper **SUBJECTS** of baptism? and IV., What are the **DUTIES** to which it binds? To these four questions we propose to give such answers as the Scriptures warrant.

I.—WHAT ARE THE **USES** OF BAPTISM?

Respecting the uses of baptism, extreme views are entertained. On the one hand, some seem to speak of it as little more than a mere form, in connection with which a Christian name is given to an infant or an adult. This is a view utterly inconsistent with the solemn manner in which it was enjoined by the risen Saviour, and with the general teaching of the Scriptures respecting it. On the other hand, there are not a few who regard baptism as indispensable to salvation, and as securing the blessings of regeneration, adoption, and justification. This view finds no warrant in the Word of God. The Ethiopian eunuch was saved *before* he was baptized ; for he was previously a believer, and, therefore saved (Acts viii. 37 and 38, and xvi. 31). Simon the sorcerer was baptized, yet still remained "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts ix. 13, 21, and 23), as is, alas ! still the case with multitudes who have been baptized, but whose lives prove them to be still unregenerated. The truth lies between the two extremes which have been mentioned. Baptism is more than a mere form, and although it does not regenerate the soul, it is a means of

grace, fitted to serve important ends, and which the Holy Spirit employs for the special benefit of those whom He regenerates and sanctifies. Some of the uses of baptism we now proceed to state—assuming for the present what will be afterwards shewn, that baptism is properly administered by pouring or sprinkling water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; and that it is to be administered, not only to adults, who profess their faith, but also to their infant offspring.

Baptism is, in the first place, *a standing monumental evidence of the truth of Christianity*, and, particularly, of the death and resurrection of Christ—the two great facts, on which our faith and hope depend. We observe baptism as an ordinance which Christ formally appointed for all nations, after He rose from the dead. On the same ground it has been observed by Christians in every age, so far back as the days of the Apostles, who also thus observed it. Of this there is the strongest historical evidence in the writings of Jews, Christians, and heathens, and also in ancient and later works of art. There is evidence, also, that the Apostles and early Christians suffered persecution, and many of them death, because of their testifying by the observance of baptism, and otherwise, their belief in Christ's death and resurrection ; and as they had the best opportunities of knowing the facts, and had no worldly interests to serve by testifying to them ; and as we know from the continued observance of baptism in later times what their testimony was, so in this ordinance we have a strong confirmation of the otherwise well-attested facts that Christ both died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.

Baptism is also *a standing testimony to the doctrine that, in the unity of the Godhead there are three distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*; in other words, it teaches the doctrine of the *Trinity*. This doctrine was exhibited in connection with our Lord's baptism by John, when the Father's voice was heard, the incarnate Son

recognized, and the Holy Ghost seen descending like a dove. In like manner, every time an infant or an adult is baptized according to the Divine formula, Christians are reminded that, while the Lord our God is one Lord, there is a distinct personality of the Father, who hath loved us with an everlasting love, and given His Son to save us; and of the Son, who undertook the work of our redemption, and who, although He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, assumed our nature, and died in our room on the accursed tree; and of the Holy Spirit, who graciously enlightens, quickens, and sanctifies God's people, and seals them to the day of redemption.

Baptism is, moreover, a *perpetual testimony to the mediatorial sovereignty of Christ, and particularly to His headship over the Church*. It was in virtue of His mediatorial sovereignty that our Lord instituted this ordinance. "All power (said He) is given unto Me in heaven, and in earth, go ye, *therefore*, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. xxvii. 18 and 19.) He thus claimed in connection with the institution of baptism, the possession of all power as Mediator, and the sovereign prerogative of giving laws to the Church. The Church, therefore, in the observance of this sacrament, recognizes the mediatorial power and authority of Christ, and acknowledges its own obligation to submit to Him as King upon His holy hill.

But, besides being a standing testimony to the truth of Christianity, to the doctrine of the Trinity, and to the headship of Christ, baptism, as a sacrament, serves peculiar sacramental ends. Thus it is a *visible sign of the needed cleansing which is effected by the Holy Spirit, and by the blood of Christ*. We come into the world "children of disobedience" and "children of wrath." (Eph. ii. 2 and 3.) We are by nature at once polluted and guilty, and therefore need to

be cleansed from our moral impurity, and to be delivered from the punishment to which sin exposes. God's people are cleansed from the pollution of sin by the Holy Spirit, and from the guilt of sin by the application of the atoning blood of Christ. All these things are represented in the sacrament of baptism. When water is sprinkled or poured on infants or adults, we are reminded that they need to be cleansed, and that they are cleansed by the agency of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and by the sprinkling on, or application to them of the blood of Christ. These views of the use of baptism as a visible sign of cleansing by the Spirit and by the blood of Christ, are justified by such texts as the following :—"I indeed baptize you with water, but He" "shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Matt. iii. 11.) "By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. xii. 13.) "According to His mercy He saves us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." (Titus iii. 5 and 6.) "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean (this was one of the 'divers washings' or 'baptisms' spoken of in the previous context), sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God." (Heb. ix. 13 and 14.)

Baptism as a Sacrament of the New Testament is not only a visible sign, but also a *Covenant Seal*. It is a covenant seal both on God's part and on ours. On God's part it is a visible pledge, confirming the promises He has made to His people and their offspring. As the bow in the cloud was a pledge of God's covenant promises to Noah and his posterity (Gen. ix. 12-17); and as circumcision was a token of God's covenant with Abraham and his seed (Gen. xvii. 9-11), so baptism, having been divinely instituted, and being "the circumcision of Christ" (Col. ii.

11), is a visible pledge or seal, by which God confirms the promises He has made to His people, and their children. On our part, baptism is a pledge, a seal by which we bind ourselves, or are bound, to the service of God. He who was circumcised, whether in infancy or adult years, was made "debtor to do the whole law" (Gal. iv. 3). In like manner, all who are baptised in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, are, in and by the Sacrament, bound to the service of the Triune Jehovah.

Baptism is, moreover, *an introductory recognition and badge of membership in the visible Church, and of separation from the world.* The visible Church consists of all who profess the true faith, together with their children, and all these, whether inwardly regenerated or not, present the outward aspect of a distinct and peculiar people, and possess important privileges. They are an organized society under a particular constitution and laws, and instituted for particular ends. Now baptism is a form of identification with this society. It does not constitute membership, but is a recognition of it. When the Israelites were baptised into Moses, in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. x. 2), they were not by this baptism made members of that Church which Moses led out of Egypt into the wilderness. It was, however, a formal separation of them from the heathen, a recognition of them as members of the visible Church, and a formal introduction of them into that new dispensation which Moses inaugurated. So is it now. Professing Christians and their children are members of the visible Church, and baptism marks them as separate from the non-professing families of the world, and outwardly identifies them with those who name the name of Christ.

It is very evident, from the uses of baptism which have been mentioned, that it is *well fitted to be a means of grace.* It is naturally and morally fitted to impress the heart and mind, to confirm, to instruct, to edify, to bind together the members of the Church of Christ, and to secure and per-

petuate the allegiance of all to their recognized Head. Reminding us of original sin, it teaches a lesson of humility. Pointing to the Spirit and blood of Christ, it teaches a lesson of gratitude. Administered to infants as well as adults, it exhibits the condescension of God, and the tenderness of Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God." When baptized children arrive at years of intelligence, the knowledge of their having been recognized as members of the visible Church is fitted to induce them deliberately to cast in their lot with the privileged society, with which they have been identified, and to walk worthy of the holy name into which they have been baptized. Nor should we hesitate to believe that God will honour His own ordinance, by making it the means of communicating grace, sooner or later, to as many as, in His sovereign mercy and love, He is pleased to call into the fellowship of His Son.

II.—WHAT IS THE PROPER MODE OF BAPTISM?

With respect to the mode of baptism the question arises—Ought water to be applied to the person in the way of pouring, affusion, or sprinkling it on him? Or, ought the person to be applied to the water in the way of immersing or dipping him in it? Those who are usually called Baptists, hold that dipping or immersion is necessary; while the general body of Christians, who claim to be Baptists in the Scriptural sense of the term, hold that the proper mode of baptism is by sprinkling, pouring or effusion. The importance of this question has been, perhaps, greatly overrated, and yet the subject is by no means unimportant. If pouring or sprinkling water on the person is the mode which the Scriptures sanction, and which more fitly represents the pouring out upon us of the Spirit, and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, it is surely better to adhere to this mode, than to adopt one which the Scriptures do not warrant, and which seems to represent the dead

polluted soul as *active* and the Spirit *passive* in the act of regeneration.

This question cannot be settled by a reference to the use by heathen writers of the word translated "baptize." These writers employ the word to denote different modes of using water and other liquids; if their use, therefore, be the law, the question must remain unsettled. But even if it could be shown that heathen, or uninspired, writers commonly use the word "baptize" in the sense of immersion, or commonly in the sense of sprinkling, it might still be questioned whether, as in case of other words, the sacred writers do not use it in a different sense. The usual meaning of the word translated "supper," is a complete meal, but the sacred writers employ it to indicate the partaking of only a small portion of bread and wine. In like manner, they may use the word "baptize" in a sense different from that which prevails in heathen writings. The question must be settled by a direct appeal to the word of God, and to the light which the circumstances, and usages, therein recorded, throw upon it. To the Scriptures, then, let us appeal.

Some light is thrown upon this question by going so far back as to the days of the flood. Peter informs us (1 Pet. iii. 20 and 21) that Noah and his family were "saved by water," and adds—"The like figure whereunto, even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." There is thus a baptism which now saves. This is not water baptism, but baptism by the spirit and blood of Christ, and this was prefigured by the manner in which Noah and his family were saved by water. How were they saved? They were saved by *not being immersed*, and thus a baptism, which *excludes the idea of immersion*, was a fitting emblem of the same thing which is signified and sealed in Christian baptism. This fact furnishes, at least, a strong presumption that Christian baptism does not require immersion.

Further light is thrown upon the Scriptural mode of baptism by a reference to the miraculous baptism of the Israelites, of which Paul speaks as a baptism unto Moses. He says (1 Cor. x. 2.) that all the fathers "were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." This certainly was not a baptism by immersion. The Egyptians alone were immersed. "Pharaoh's chariots, and his host, hath he cast into the sea; his chosen captains also *are drowned* in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them; they sank into the bottom as a stone." (Ex. xiv. 4 and 5). "But the children of Israel *walked upon dry land* in the midst of the sea." (Ex. xiv. 29.) Water was poured out upon them from the clouds above, as it is said (Psalm xvii. 16 and 17). "The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid; the depths also were troubled. *The clouds poured out water*"—language employed with reference to the passage through the Red Sea in the days of Moses, as is evident from the following verses (19 and 20.) "Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest Thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron." Here is one clear case of baptism, not by immersion but by pouring.

The Scriptural mode of baptism becomes still more evident by a reference to the ordinary baptisms of the Mosaic dispensation. Under that dispensation there were, as we read (Heb. ix. 10), divers "washings," or as the Greek word may be literally translated, and is translated (Heb. vi. 2), "Baptisms." Of these "divers baptisms" examples are given. Thus we read (Heb. ix. 13) of "the ashes of an heifer *sprinkling* the unclean." This was not the sprinkling merely of ashes, but of water in which the ashes were thrown (Num. xix. 17 & 18). Other examples of these "divers baptisms" are thus described (Heb. ix. 19 & 21): "When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wood, and

hyssop, and *sprinkled* both the book and all the people." "Moreover he *sprinkled* likewise with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry." Thus these "divers baptisms" were not immersions but sprinklings. Indeed they could not well be otherwise than by sprinkling or affusion. There was not sufficient water in the tabernacle in which to immerse "all the people," and "all the vessels of the ministry." Beside the immersion of a single hand or a single cup, in a laver, or vessel containing water or blood, if that hand or cup were ceremonially unclean, would defile the laver or vessel, the water or blood, so as to render the whole unfit for use until a new ceremonial purification was effected. Thus the Levitical baptisms were decidedly not by immersion, but by sprinkling or affusion.

The accounts given of the ceremonial baptisms practised by the Pharisees serve to show what was the prevalent mode of baptism in ancient times. We read (Luke xi. 37 & 38) that a certain Pharisee besought our Lord to dine with him, and that he went in and sat down to meat; "And (it is added) when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed (literally, *was not first baptized*) before dinner." Was the Pharisee astonished because our Lord was not completely immersed before dinner? Did common usages or ceremonial laws require this? Assuredly not. The explanation is that the Pharisees, who laid great stress on ceremonial purifications, imagined that it was necessary to pour water on their hands, to cleanse them from ceremonial defilement, before eating. It is accordingly said: "The Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash (literally, *except they be baptized*) they eat not." It is thus evident that even the Pharisees, who were inclined to overdo everything on an outward ceremonial kind, did not baptize by the immersion of the whole person, but rather by the sprinkling

or washing of the hands. With regard to the Pharisees it is further said (Matt. vii. 4): "And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing (literally, *the baptism*) of cups and pots, brazen vessels and of tables." Thus baptism was evidently intended for the purpose of ceremonial purification, and there is no reason to suppose that in this case there was a departure from the usual mode adopted in cleansing the vessels of the sanctuary. On the contrary, so far at least as the tables were concerned, they were assuredly not immersed. Tables are not dipped in water to be cleansed either from literal or ceremonial defilement. They are cleansed by the application of water to them, not of them to water.

In the mode adopted by John the Baptist we have additional information on this subject. How did he baptize? There is no reason to suppose that he departed from the usual mode adopted by the priests according to the ceremonial law. He belonged to the priestly order. His father was a priest, and his mother was of the daughters of Aaron, and as the priests were wont to baptize by the sprinkling of water or blood; so, when no hint to the contrary is given, it is reasonable to suppose that he adopted the mode common with the priests. It is moreover incredible that with his own hands he immersed the vast multitudes whom he baptized. Here it is worthy of notice that it is never said, or even hinted, that he *touched with his hands* one single person in the act of baptizing, nor that any one else touched them as his substitute in performing this ceremony. It may be added that it is exceedingly improbable that the many thousands whom John baptized came to him provided with the changes of raiment which would be necessary if they were immersed. It is far more likely that, as Moses sprinkled all the people, John baptized in a similar manner.

This view of John's mode of baptizing is confirmed by the fact that he uses the same word to denote his own use of water and Christ's bestowal of the Spirit. "I in-

deed baptize you with water ; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear ; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”—(Matt. iii. 11.) How did Christ baptize with the Spirit ? We read that on the day of Pentecost tongues, as of fire, came and sat upon the disciples, and that they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, and that this was in accordance with the ancient prophecy—“On my servants and on my handmaidens will I *pour out* in these days of my Spirit.”—(Acts, ii. 1, 4, 16 & 17.) It thus appears that baptizing with the Spirit is the same as pouring out the Spirit, and hence it may be inferred that John’s baptism was after a similar mode. This is conclusively settled by Peter’s subsequent reference to the day of Pentecost (Acts, xi. 15 & 16) : “As I began to speak the Holy Ghost *fell on them* as on us at the beginning.” (Here there is no hint of anything like immersion into the Spirit.) “Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.” As the Holy Spirit *fell* on the Gentile hearers of Peter’s discourse, so the water *fell* on those whom John baptized. In neither case was there anything like immersion.

Nor is it any valid objection to the view now presented of John’s baptism, that when Christ was baptized by him it is said (Matt. iii. 16) that he went up “out of the water.” Our Lord might have gone “out of” (or “from,” as the word may be translated) the water without having been immersed in it. He may have gone merely to the edge of the water, and there water may have been poured on him, in a manner which would correspond with the manner in which the Spirit then *descended* on him. Neither is it a valid objection to this view of John’s mode of baptizing, that it is recorded (John, iii. 23) that he “was baptizing in Ænon, near to Salim, because there was much water there.” The words translated

“much water ” literally mean “many waters,” and point to the numerous streamlets found in Ænon. These were well suited for baptisms according to the ancient law, which required the use of “running water.”—(Num. xix. 17 & 18.) John preferred the streams of Ænon, not because they were needed for immersion, but because they furnished “running water.” Or he may have preferred them as being serviceable for the ordinary ablutions and other uses of the multitudes who came to his baptism.

When we come to consider what is said of Christian baptism we find nothing to intimate a departure from the usual mode of sprinkling or pouring. On the contrary, whether we consider the *designs of this ordinance*, or the *recorded instances* of its observance we find reasons for believing that the ancient and usual mode was continued. Christian baptism, as we have already seen, was designed, among other things, to be a visible emblem or representation of regeneration by the Spirit, and cleansing by the blood of Christ. Now the communication of the Spirit's grace and the application of Christ's blood are commonly described in Scripture, with respect to modes, by terms which signify not immersion, but pouring or sprinkling. It is never said that we are immersed into the Spirit, or into the blood of Christ, but we frequently read such language as the following—“I will *pour my Spirit* on thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring (Is. xlv. 3) “Then will I *sprinkle clean water* upon you, and ye shall be clean ” “A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit with I put within you” (Ezek. xxxvi. 25 & 26.) “I will *pour* upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication.” (Zech. xii. 10.) “So shall He (that is the Messiah) *sprinkle* many nations.” (Is. lii. 15.) “Ye are come unto Mount Zion ” “and to Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant, and to the *blood of sprinkling*, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” With such language before us it is quite evident that, not immersion, but pouring, or sprinkling, is the fitting mode

of using the water, which represents cleansing by the Spirit and the blood of Christ.

It is true that, with respect to baptism by the Spirit, it is said (Rom vi. 4.) that "we are buried with Him by baptism into death"; and that it is also written—"Buried with Him in baptism wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God" (Col. ii. 12); and that these passages seem, at first sight, to favour the idea that baptism is equivalent to immersion—that as burial and resurrection are a going down into the earth and coming out of it, so baptism is a going down into the water and coming out of it, the person being completely covered according to the one figure by earth, and according to the other by water. These passages, however, when carefully examined, give no warrant to baptism by immersion. The baptism spoken of is not water baptism, but that higher baptism of which it is elsewhere (1 Cor xii. 13) said—"By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." This baptism effects union with Christ, and the *effects* of it are that we are dead to sin and alive to God: we are freed from sin, and live with Christ. (Rom. vi. 5—11, Col. ii. 11—13.) In other words, *in consequence of* the baptism of the Spirit uniting us to Christ we are crucified, buried, and quickened together with Christ. The word "baptism" describes the *efficient cause* and the words "burial" and "resurrection" describe the *effects*, and, unless a cause and its effects must resemble each other in respect to mode, it cannot be concluded that there is any resemblance between the mode of baptism and the mode of a burial and resurrection. There was no resemblance between cause and effect in the mode of the breathing of the four winds upon the slain, and their rising up and standing on their feet, an exceeding great army (Ezek xxxvi. 9 & 10) and so there is no necessary resemblance between cause and effect in the mode of baptism by the Spirit and the mode of a burial and resurrection consequent thereon. Even if the baptism and burial were not cause and effect, but alike

emblems of the same thing, it does not follow that they must resemble each other. The growing of seed sown in a field, and the spreading of leaven in meal are both emblems of the same thing—the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. xiii. 24 & 33) but do not resemble each other in respect to mode. There may be many shadows of the same substance very different from each other, according to the different directions from which they are cast and the different planes on which they are projected, so although baptism and burial might be emblems of the same thing, **they do not, therefore, resemble each other.**

In the recorded instances of Christian baptism in Apostolic times, we find nothing to shew that, in any case, the baptized were immersed. There is not a single instance in which it is said that the baptized or the persons baptizing went *under* the water so as to be completely *covered* by it. There is no instance in which it is said that the person baptizing *even touched* the baptized in the act of baptizing, much less *laid hands upon them and dipped them*. If there be any instance which seems to favour the idea of immersion it is the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip. We read (Acts viii. 38 & 39), that “they went down *both* into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him,” and that they “came up out of the water.” But, in this account there is really nothing to favour the idea of immersion, except it be found in the words “went down into,” and “came up out of;” which, if they prove immersion, prove that *both Philip and the eunuch* went down wholly under the water, and that while *both* were wholly covered by the water the one baptized the other. This supposition is too absurd to be believed. Evidently the words do not mean immersion, and this view is confirmed by the fact that the word translated “into” is frequently translated “to;” and that the word translated “out of” may be translated “from,” and is very rarely translated “out of.” The plain meaning of the narrative is, that Philip and the eunuch went to the

margin of the water, where the latter was baptized in the usual manner, and not by immersion.

In the other instances recorded no hint is given favourable to immersion. On the contrary, the narratives favour the mode of sprinkling or affusion. Three thousand persons were baptized by the Apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 41). Those baptized were, for the most part, strangers, and it is not likely that they all came provided with the changes of raiment necessary in case of immersion. It is moreover incredible that so great a multitude could have been immersed by the Apostles within a few hours, without a miracle, of which no hint is given. There is no account of their having been led forth to any pool, or stream, or river: they were apparently baptized on the spot. This could easily be done, if the Apostles imitated the example of Moses and the priests, who dipped not, but sprinkled "all the people."—(Heb. ix. 19).

In the accounts given of the baptism of Paul, of the Philippian gaoler, and of Lydia, there is no hint given favourable to immersion. After his conversion Paul was conducted to the house of Judas. There he was visited by Ananias, who put his hands on him that he might receive his sight. Afterwards, as we read (Acts ix. 18) he "arose and (literally standing up) was baptized." There is no account of Ananias putting his hands on him, or of his leading him to a river, cistern or pool, for immersion. As to the Philippian gaoler, it is very unlikely that all the conveniences were at hand for the immersion of himself and of his household. As to Lydia, there is no hint given that Paul and Silas put their hands on her and the members of her household, and immersed them in river, pool or cistern. We are left to infer that they baptized them in the usual manner of sprinkling or pouring water upon them. In short, we know not of a single case in the inspired record in which it can be shown that any person was baptized by immersion. Every instance recorded is in favour of sprinkling, pouring or affusion.

On the whole, we are fully satisfied, as the result of appealing to God's word, that baptism is properly administered by pouring or sprinkling water on the person baptized, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Nor do we hesitate in adopting this conclusion, because, after the days of the Apostles, immersion was practised. This mode was indeed practised in these times, but it was not held to be necessary. It was the result of a tendency, which has prevailed in all ages, to overdo or pervert everything of an outward or ceremonial character. This tendency led some of the early Christians to immerse the subjects of baptism in a manner which, especially in the baptism of adult men and women, is revolting to our sense of decency and decorum. We lay no stress, therefore, on the early introduction of baptism by immersion into the Church after the times of the Apostles. We prefer to abide by the mode which we conscientiously believe is taught in the Holy Scriptures.

III.—WHO MAY BE BAPTIZED?

There is no question respecting the propriety of baptizing adult persons, who make a credible profession of faith in Christ (Acts viii. 36 & 37). It has, however been questioned whether the children of professing Christians may be baptized. Those who insist on immersion as the only proper mode of baptism deny the propriety of baptizing infants. On the other hand, the Churches generally maintain that the baptism of infants is warranted by the word of God. This is a question which is really of vast importance. It concerns the "little ones" whom the Saviour so tenderly loves. It concerns the recognition of their covenant rights and privileges. Its decision determines whether they belong to, or are excluded from, the visible Church, whether they occupy a position similar to that of the children of God's peculiar people in ancient times, or to that of the children of the uncircumcised hea-

then. We are satisfied that the Scriptures warrant the baptism of infants. Apparent objections, we frankly admit, but these disappear when fairly examined. On the other hand, the arguments in favour of infant baptism, we deem to be conclusive.

It may be as well to advert, in the first place, to the main objections which have been urged against infant baptism. The disposal of these will prepare the way for the positive arguments in its favour. It has been said that *no where in Scripture it is expressly enjoined*. To this objection we reply, that it is not a sufficient objection to a doctrine or practice, that it is not, in so many words, enjoined in Scripture. It is enough, if it can be deduced by fair reasoning from express statements. Who doubts the propriety of admitting women to the Lord's table, although there is no express warrant for this in the word of God? Why should we then doubt the propriety of infant baptism if it can be justified in the same way as female communion can be justified? But to this objection we further reply, that the terms of our Lord's commission *include* infants as well as adults. The commission does not exclude infant children any more than it excludes aged grand-parents. If the Apostles had been commanded to teach all nations, *circumcising* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, no one would imagine that infants were to be excluded. Why should they be excluded, when we find the word "baptizing" instead of "circumcising?" Is there anything to prevent the baptism of those who might be circumcised if the command had been to "teach and circumcise?"

It has further been objected that there *is no recorded instance of infants being baptized by the Apostles or disciples of Christ*. To this we reply that the absence of recorded examples does not prove a practice unscriptural. There is no recorded instance of adult baptism, in the way now common with those who exclude infants from the ordi-

nance. We read of no one, born when his parents were baptized believers, living unbaptized to mature years, in a Christian family, and then baptized on profession of faith; and yet no one denies the propriety of baptizing such persons. But to this objection we further reply, that of the ten recorded instances of Christian baptism, two were those of single individuals, Paul and the Ethiopian eunuch, who had no children to be baptized; one was the baptism, on the day of Pentecost, of three thousands, whose families were, doubtless, many of them, in distant parts, and that of the remaining cases *the majority were household baptisms*; and that it is very improbable that there was not a single child in any one of the four or five baptized households. If it had been recorded in the Books of Samuel that Judaism had been extended to some heathen nations; and if only ten instances of circumcision had been mentioned, it would not be surprising if no particular mention were made of the circumcision of infants, as distinct from their parents; and if it were stated that, of the ten instances, five households were circumcised, there would be little ground for affirming that, in point of fact, the children of the proselytes were not circumcised. There is equally little reason for affirming that, in point of fact, children were not baptized by the Apostles and disciples of Christ.

It is further said that *as infants are incapable of exercising faith, they are excluded from baptism* by the declaration of our Lord: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned." (Mark xvi. 16). It is argued that this text proves that faith is an indispensable pre-requisite to baptism *in the case of all*. The argument, however, is quite inconclusive. Had God said to Moses, with respect to the heathen: "He that believeth and is circumcised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned," who would have imagined that the infant children of believing proselytes were not to be circumcised? But this was in substance what God did say to Moses. Moses was, un-

questionably, taught that any heathens who believed and were circumcised would be saved, and moreover, that their children ought to be circumcised. The truth is, our Lord's words do not refer to infants. For, if it be otherwise, they prove that infants cannot be saved. If, in all cases, faith must precede baptism, then, according to the same mode of reasoning, both faith and baptism must precede salvation ; and hence, as a child cannot believe and cannot be baptized, it cannot be saved. This monstrous conclusion all must repudiate. Blessed be God, there are millions who have died in infancy, who without believing have been saved, and who are now in glory.

It has still further been said, that it is *absurd to suppose that an unconscious infant can be brought under covenant engagements*, which it can neither understand nor assent to. To this objection we reply that it is not a matter of argument, but a matter of fact, that God has placed infants under covenant engagements. All the children of men have been placed under covenant engagements, by the covenant made with Adam, and are held liable to the penalty attached to its violation. Abraham's children and posterity were placed under responsibilities by the covenant made with the Father of the faithful. Israel's "*little ones*" also were held liable to the engagements of the covenant, of which Moses thus speaks, (Deut. xxix. 9—12): "Keep therefore the words of this covenant and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do. Ye stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God ; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, *your little ones*, your wives, and thy stranger that is within thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood, unto the drawer of thy water ; that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and unto His oath, which the Lord thy God maketh unto thee this day." It may be added that, in the ordinary course of human affairs, according to the arrangements of God's Providence, the little ones in families, in communities, in

nations, are held legally responsible for covenant engagements made by parents, legislators, and rulers. Thus, as a matter of fact, the unconsciousness of infants does not exempt them from covenant responsibilities, as it does not exclude them from covenant blessings.

Having thus disposed of the chief leading objections, which, if left unanswered, might have prevented the positive arguments from having their due weight, we now proceed to plead for the rights and privileges of the "little ones," who cannot plead for themselves. Here we take our stand on the terms of our Lord's commission, (Matt. xxviii. 19): "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In this commission there is ample warrant for the baptism of infants as well as adults—of children as well as of heads of families. The terms of the commission do not require that all who were to be baptized, must first be instructed; as has been inferred from the fact that teaching and baptizing are both mentioned in a particular order. This may be made plain by an illustration. Let it be supposed that, with reference to some island of naked savages, the command were given: "Go and teach all these savages, *clothing them* with comfortable raiment;" how would the command be interpreted? Who would imagine that, because the infants could not be instructed, they must not be clothed. In the absence of any express limitations, the officers, receiving the commission, would certainly feel themselves bound to clothe the children who could not learn; as well as their parents who did learn. In like manner we interpret our Lord's commission, and, having no contrary directions, we baptize infants who cannot know Christ, as well as their parents, who know and believe in Him. It devolves on those who refuse the baptism of infants, to prove that there are special reasons for excluding all children from the commission, which in its general terms includes them. This they cannot do.

We do not deny that, apart from the terms of our Lord's commission, there are reasons, found in Scripture, for restricting baptism to professing Christians and their children; but we deny that there are grounds for excluding their children, and maintain that, in the absence of restrictions to this effect, the commission warrants their baptism. This view is fully confirmed by various considerations which can only be briefly referred to at present. Thus, we know that *the baptism of infants was no new thing in the Church of God*. All the Israelites, including men, women and children, were baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea, (1 Cor. x. 2). It was not merely on the adult men and women that the water was poured down, but also on the little ones,—on as many as God brought out of Egypt. There is reason also, to believe that when heathen families were admitted to the Jewish Church, all the members, young and old, were baptized. If a Jew, coming into contact with a Gentile, needed to undergo a baptism of purification, before being re-admitted with the congregation, we cannot imagine that any members of a Gentile family would be permitted to mingle with the Jews without undergoing a similar baptismal purification. As infant baptism was thus no new thing in God's Church, and as there is ample room in our Lord's commission for the baptism of infants, it is reasonable to conclude that infants may be baptized, and that the Apostles so understood the commission.

It is further confirmatory of this view that, as *baptism and circumcision are corresponding sacraments*, both being sacraments of initiation, and, virtually, emblematic of the same thing, and as *infants were circumcised, so children may be baptized*. Baptism is spoken of (Col. ii. 11) as "the circumcision of Christ." Both sacraments represent the putting off the corruptions of the flesh, and the necessity of regeneration. It is accordingly said (Col. ii. 11 and 12), "Ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the

flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." Such being the similarity between the two sacraments, as visible signs, it is most likely that children were to be baptized, as they had been circumcised. This is the sense in which the Apostles would most naturally interpret the commission. They were Jews. Their habits of thinking were formed according to the doctrines and practices of the Jewish economy. They were familiar with the circumcision and baptism of children, and would naturally interpret the commission as authorizing the administration of Christian baptism to the little ones.

It is further to be borne in mind that baptism, like circumcision, was designed to be a *covenant seal*. It was designed to be a seal and pledge of certain rights and privileges which God had promised to bestow, and to bind the recipients of it in allegiance to God. Now the promises of the ancient covenant had reference not merely to adult believers, but also to their infant offspring. "The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God will call." And we find (Deut. xxix. 10-12), that the "little ones" were bound by the covenant made with their fathers. Thus the children had covenant rights, and were placed under covenant responsibilities. Circumcision was the pledge and seal of the covenant, and, as children were interested in the covenant, they were circumcised. The ancient promises still belong to the children of God's people (Acts ii. 39), and they are still under covenant responsibilities. It is, therefore, right and proper that their rights and responsibilities should be sealed by baptism, which is "the circumcision of Christ."

It is, moreover, to be remembered that *children have ever been recognized as within the pale of the visible Church*. So it was in the days of Abraham. So it was in the days of Moses. So it was in the days of our Lord's public mini-

try. He took the little children in His arms and blessed them, and said that of such was the kingdom of heaven. The Good Shepherd recognized the lambs as belonging to His sheep-fold. Nor is there any reason to suppose that, after His resurrection, they were excluded. The Apostles give no hint of their exclusion. Had they excluded the little ones from the visible Church, we can easily conceive what an outcry would have been raised against them by their Jewish assailants. We can imagine the Jewish enemies of the Gospel appealing to the hearts of the Jews, and saying, "Here are men who profess to teach a system better than that we have received from Moses—a religion in which there is more of love and kindness—and yet they exclude our children from the Church in which they have been hitherto regarded as members." But we never read of such accusations, and the absence of them proves that the Apostles retained children in the Church—the lambs in the fold. This is clearly established by what Paul says (1 Cor. vii. 14.) "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." This does not, of course, mean that the children of even one believing parent were, in the highest sense, holy; but certainly implies that they possess a distinct character as being separate from those who are outside the visible Church. Now, it has been already shewn that baptism was intended to be a formal recognition of membership in the Church, and a badge of separation from the world; and as we have now seen that the infant children of believers are within the sphere of the visible Church, so it follows that they are entitled to receive in baptism the visible badge of membership and of separation from the world.

Such are some of the arguments by which we plead for the right of infants to Christian baptism. We believe that our Lord conferred on them this right in the terms of His

commission to the Apostles. This commission gives to the infant children of believers, as well as to believers themselves, the right to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. A similar right they enjoyed under the older and inferior economy, and no good reason can be shewn why they should now be stripped of it. On the contrary, the children of believers are as much interested in the covenant now, and as much identified with the visible Church as in the ancient times; it is, therefore, wrong to withhold from them the seal of the covenant and the badge of membership. If all the infants of ancient Israel were baptized "unto Moses," much more ought the infants of those who are "Israelites indeed" to be baptized "unto Christ."

Our arguments need no confirmation from the teaching and practices of post-apostolic times. It is, however, well to know that during the earlier centuries the propriety of infant baptism was almost universally admitted. Even Tertullian, who advised that the baptism of infants, and of unmarried persons should be deferred, did not deny that the baptism of either was lawful. Pelagius, also, who was chargeable with enough of errors on other matters, thus indignantly repels the charge of denying infant baptism. "Men slander me, as if I denied the sacrament of baptism to infants. I never heard of any, not even the most impious heretic, who denied baptism to infants." It is well, also, to know that during the long centuries which elapsed from the days of Augustine to the time of the Reformation, infant baptism was practised, not only in those churches which apostatized from the true faith, but by such witnesses for the truth as the faithful Waldenses, and that the Reformers also generally adhered to the practice, which is still retained by the great majority of evangelical Christians.

IV—WHAT ARE THE DUTIES TO WHICH BAPTISM BINDS?

As baptism is a recognition of the membership of chil-

dren in the visible Church, so the *Church is bound to take measures, for their protection, instruction and discipline.* It is not enough that the Church formally acknowledges the little ones as born to the rights of citizenship, it should train them to the duties of citizens. The States and Kingdoms of the world neglect not the interests of the children born within their realms. They protect their rights, and train them to loyalty. The Church is surely equally bound to care for the interests of the children born within its pale, and to whom, as infant members of the commonwealth of Israel, it administers the badge of citizenship. We cannot now specify or illustrate all the duties which the Church owes to its baptized children, but may mention some of them. Thus the Church is bound to take measures for educating its infant members. A jealous care and oversight should be exercised even in regard to their secular training. But, above all, their instruction in religious matters should be provided for. Ministers should, in their preaching, give to children, as well as to adults, a portion of spiritual food in due season. They should provide milk for babes, as well as meat for full grown men. Sabbath-schools should be established, encouraged, and superintended by authorized office-bearers of the Church. Parents and heads of families ought to be instructed in their duties to the young, and held responsible for their proper training and discipline. The baptized children of the Church should also have a special place in its prayers, and be trained to the service of praise. They should, moreover, be encouraged to make a public avowal, in due time, of their faith in Christ, and allegiance to Him in the Sacrament of the Supper. In short, the Church is bound to employ every means within its power to bring its children into the actual possession, and fullest enjoyment, of all the spiritual blessings of the Covenant of Grace.

Parents and heads of families are specially bound to care for the interests of their baptized children. Having been

permitted to bring them to Christ in the exercise of faith, and formally to consecrate them to God in the ordinance of baptism, they should feel specially anxious to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Under the ancient economy, parents were very particularly enjoined to instruct their children in religious duties, (Deut. vi. 4-7): "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord ; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might ; these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart ; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Christian parents are still bound, in like manner (Eph. vi. 4), to instruct their children in the doctrines of the Christian faith, and the principles of Christian duty. They should endeavour to make them acquainted with the character and perfections of the Triune Jehovah, in whose name they have been baptized ; to convince them of their need of cleansing, by the Spirit and blood of Christ, as represented in baptism ; to explain to them the promises and privileges of the covenant, whose seal has been put upon them ; and to urge them to the discharge of those duties to which they are bound by baptism, and which devolve on them as recognized members of the visible Church. They should stir them up to exhibit the gratitude they owe for the high honour put on them and the privileges bestowed on them. Parents ought, moreover, to pray with, and for, their children in their homes ; regularly to engage with them in family worship ; to train them to regular attendance upon the public ordinances and means of grace ; and to co-operate with the office-bearers of the Church in leading them to an early, intelligent, deliberate, and public profession of their faith in Christ ; and to realize full communion in the Church, and in all the benefits and blessings of the everlasting covenant.

Nor must we omit a reference to the *duties to which the baptized are themselves bound by their baptism*. If baptism seals to them important rights and privileges, it not less binds them to all Christian duties. God has been pleased to put upon them the mark of his interest in them, the seal of his covenant, and the badge of their separation from the world. To them, as the children of believing parents special rights and promises appertain. They have been solemnly dedicated by their parents, to the service of God. They are specially bound, therefore, to remember their Creator in the days of their youth ; to serve the God of their fathers with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind. They should beware of breaking the bands, or casting away the cords, which, for their best interests, have been drawn around them. By devoting themselves to the service of God, they should do honour and shew gratitude to their parents, to whom, under God, they are indebted for their special position and privileges. Recognized as members of the visible Church they should endeavour to adorn its doctrines, and to advance its interests. When they attain to riper years they should never forget their privileges and responsibilities. For, as it is well said in the larger Catechism (Q., 167), "The needful, but much neglected duty of improving our baptism, is to be performed by us all our life long, especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others ; by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow, made therein ; by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of, and walking contrary to, the grace of baptism, and our engagements ; by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that Sacrament ; by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortification of sin, and quickening of grace ; and by endeavouring to

live by faith, to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness, as those who have given up their names to Christ, and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit into one body.”





CANADA

Presbyterian Church Pulpit.

BY REV. J. MCTAVISH,

WOODSTOCK.

THE HOLY SPIRIT—THE HEAVENLY TEACHER.



AST and varied as is the natural creation, and wonderful the revelation of God given therein, it affords but a very imperfect view of His character. Neither creation out of nothingness, nor worlds piled on worlds, and these filled to the uttermost with creations of His wisdom and power could, as from His hand, afford even a suitable sphere for a thorough manifestation of His glory. Creation out of nothingness, and the preservation of the sinless, did not indicate, and could not prove, that He was able to redeem the guilty, or create anew polluted beings. Men who can make a new thing find it utterly impossible to repair an old, shattered, worm-eaten or rust-eaten instrument; and in a sinless state there was no means of shewing that God could justify an ungodly, or sanctify a polluted race, and raise children of wrath, a seed of evil

doers, children and slaves of Satan, to the dispositions and dignity of sons of God. The entrance of sin, and the ruin which it wrought among His works, furnished the needed opportunity for giving a full display of His wondrous perfections, and now, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, we see attributes, the existence of which was previously quite unknown; and these, and those formerly revealed, all set forth in the clearest light, so that we are taught to regard this as the last, the best, the brightest revelation of His glory.

The plan of the work of redemption is eternal as the God who devised it. The foundation of it was laid on Calvary by the Lord Jesus in His own blood; and the erection of the building is now carried on by the Holy Ghost. It is to this latter part of God's work that attention is now to be directed. As He, having formed each living species on the earth, uses it to perpetuate its own existence: so, having brought the first transgressor of our race into covenant with Himself and created it anew, He carries on His work of power to the last through men, and ordinarily through living men, though it is said of one (and might be of many), "he being dead yet speaketh." The tongues of these are His great instruments, and therefore their glory. This work cannot be carried on apart from the word of God, it is the only incorruptible seed, and produces the only fruit which liveth and abideth forever; not that the word can, by itself, produce any good in a corrupt nature, such it only killeth, maketh worse than before; but it is no more to blame for this than the sun is for hastening the decay of the dead, or withering where there is lack of moisture, and we should cherish an ever-present consciousness, both that the word is needed, and that the Holy Ghost alone can produce the effects which God seeks; and that, in His hands, the word becomes spirit and life, the power of God unto salvation. The fact that God uses instruments should make us value these, even mere human qualities

are God's good gifts, and yet we must beware of being influenced in our estimate of men more by smartness, a good presence, or address or voice or elocution, than by knowledge of the truth and communion with God. The former of these are like the colouring of our richer fruits, which attracts our attention, and invites us to use them, but is of itself of no substantial value ; and we should always lay to heart, that the best of men can never supply to us the place of the Holy Spirit ; indeed God's using the Church to perpetuate itself only manifests the more clearly the necessity for the Divine agency to secure the result. The treasure is put into earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be, that is, may be seen to be, of God and not of us, 2 Cor. iv. 7, that He may have all the glory.

The work of the Spirit cannot be properly appreciated unless we consider

I. The condition to which sin reduced the whole race of man.

We are described, by one who knows us all, as dead in trespasses and sins. When earthly things die they always undergo a process of corruption, but as a long period elapses before that appears in some species of plants, and it is soon ended in regard to animals, death does not so forcibly suggest to us the idea of decay as of powerlessness or uselessness. This is the idea expressed in the proverb, "A living dog is better than a dead lion." The spiritually dead are essentially useless, God is not in any of their thoughts. How to advance His kingdom in their souls or in those of others, or to shew forth His glory and honour, never exercises their minds or gives employment to their powers. They have no capacity for spiritual duty, no desire or relish for spiritual enjoyment, no created power can make any permanent or saving impression on them, or turn them to any good account, they are like rotten wood which cannot hold a nail, and which the effort to fasten securely only destroys ; sin has so insinuated itself into, and interwoven itself with, the fibres of our

nature, permeated them so thoroughly, as to change its entire character ; as if a heart, warm with love to God and man and jealous of their honour, had become cold as ice, and hard and insensible as stone. We find changes analogous to this in the world of matter. The quarries of earth contain vestiges of animals, into the forms of which the stony matter which surrounds them has filtered so effectually, and so arranged itself there, that, while the original structure is clearly seen, the whole substance has gone, stone has taken its place. Thus, but far worse, is man's nature altered, his heart is not only cold and insensible, but it is vile ; a noisome stench rises from it which destroys life on every hand, with a power far exceeding that once attributed to the Upas tree, when it was alleged no bird could cross the valley in which it grew ; or the Dead Sea, when it was asserted that no creature could live near it, and no bird could fly over it ; the old life is gone, but he has got instead a thoroughly evil, a thoroughly wicked life, the carnal mind is enmity against God, and all in whom it reigns "are foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another," filled with envy of God, and of every being who appears to have any quality or property which they themselves do not possess, or only in an inferior degree, yea, even for those qualities which they desire not. These are like Cain, who hated his brother simply because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

II. The need of special Divine agency appears when we consider the work to be done.

It is necessary, in order to our being fitted for the glorious destiny which God proposes to us, that sensibility be awakened where none exists, that knowledge take the place, not of simple ignorance, but of grossly wrong opinions, the creations of a benighted intellect, that reason take the room of madness, and that where there was no strength, and poor lost ones were led captive by

the Devil at his will, and plunged not only without opposition but with a kind of satisfaction into every form of sin, strength be given "with might" "in the inner man," yea, "with all might according to God's glorious power," and these miserable creatures be made able and willing to trample on all the power of the enemy, that the disease, the noisome deadly effluvia, the vile taste which rioted in corruption be destroyed, and health and sweetness be restored, and that a sweet savour of Christ be shed abroad, and love to God and men be placed within, in more than its former fulness and power, so that it shall for ever, the one grand constraining influence of their existence. It is recorded of Melancthon, that when he first loved the Lord he realised the truth very vividly, and desired to show it to others, but was so ignorant of the corruption of human nature, and of the Spirit's work, that he thought he would have simply to declare the word, in order to secure men's acceptance of Jesus. He began to preach, but met with so little success that he soon learned, as many have done since, that human skill and eloquence cannot break hard hearts, burn up corruption or kindle a fire of love to God in the soul, and was led to say he found old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon. When brought to this state of mind men are ready, when anything good is done by them, to say, "What hath God wrought?" "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake."

III. The language in which the change is spoken of in the Word of God shews that it lies beyond created power.

The believer is said to be born again, born from above, born of the Spirit, coming down out of heaven from God, "therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," (or a new creation, *κτισις*), "old things are to him passed away, all things are become new." The change is as great and real as if God and creation were all changed; he has reached the Mount Zion, the city which hath

foundations, his citizenship is in heaven, his thoughts and wishes and conversation are no longer of earthly but of heavenly things; his tastes are spiritual, his delight is communion with God, his soul pants for Him, and he waits for the coming of the Lord Jesus, as the event which is to crown all his wishes, and usher him into the possession of all that he can desire. Such are some of the expressions in which this wondrous change is presented to us.

IV. This work is expressly assigned to God in such passages as, "The Lord Thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."—Deut. xxx. 6. "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your vileness will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."—Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. "Unless a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—John iii. 3. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."—2. Cor. iv. 6. "Create in me a clean heart, O God."—Psalm li. 10. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."—Psalm cx. 3. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."—Luke iv. 18. "The water that I will give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."—John iv. 14. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth."—John xiv. 16, 17. "When he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."—John xvi. 13. This Spirit is not an influence or an

idea, nor power or disposition, but a living person, the third person of the Godhead, who, in the arrangement of the Divine purpose, comes as the servant of Jesus Christ, taking thus, the lowest place in the work of redemption. Yet He is God, He is called God. Acts v. 4. Divine power is ascribed to Him. Job xxvi. 13. Divine worship is paid to Him in the Apostolic benedictions, and in nothing is His divinity and personality more clearly shewn than in the fact that the only sin that cannot be forgiven at all to men is, when they maliciously speak evil against the Holy Ghost, attributing His work to the Devil. Mark iii. 29.

Many seem to think that, because conversion is said to be the work of God, it is, therefore, not our duty, in fact it is presumption, for anyone to move the least towards giving himself to God, till he feels that God is drawing him to Himself. We ought to effect all this change for ourselves, to make for ourselves new hearts. Ezek. xviii. 31 ; Deut. x. 16. We have no right to continue polluted, and plead our inability to be otherwise as an apology for our guilt and vileness. We should convert ourselves ; all admit our duty to repent—well, it is equally our duty to convert.

In Acts iii. 19, we find the two things enjoined, though our version does not bring them out, that we should repent of sin, and should convert, or, as we may put it, turn to God. We should convert ourselves to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for the coming of His Son from heaven, even Jesus that is delivering us from the wrath that is to come. 1 Thess. i 9, 10. It is the same word and the same part of it that is translated “turn” in this passage, and it is rightly so translated, which in Acts iii., 19, is translated, “be converted.” But alas ! we have no more power to turn properly to God, than the scattered leaves of autumn, when in the grasp of the tempest, to return to the connection from which they were severed, or to stay their course, and are as unwilling to do so as

the escaped felon to return to the prison in which he had been confined, or the fugitive slave to his toils, and the lash. This, which we ought to do for ourselves, but cannot, God does for His chosen, or rather He makes them able and willing to do it for themselves. He, blessed be His name, opens the eyes of poor blind sinners to understand their lost condition, the character of God, His law, and His dealings with men, and how dreadfully, madly infatuated they have been in keeping away from Him; and draws them to himself with cords of love, and the bands of a man. I know a man into whose hands a copy of "Alleine's Alarm" fell, and who, by reading it, was led to Jesus. He had never seen a Bible, there were none in his native parish, unless one or two in the minister's house; he began to speak about the Bible, he dreamed about it, he looked, as he followed the cows on the moor, if he could find one. He was thought insane; his father, with whom he tilled his patch of ground, would at times rest on his spade, and weep as he looked on his boy; and he, in return, while fearing that he might be treated as a neighbour's boy had been not long before, and who had died under the means used to cure him of the same malady, as it was reckoned, wept over his father's blindness and lost condition. The minister said he was a maniac, and the youth longed for an opportunity of conversing with him. At length this occurred, through his being allowed to carry to the manse some yarn which his mother had spun. As he entered the kitchen the domestics fled; after a time a door was cautiously opened, and as he behaved respectfully, confidence was restored. He asked for the minister, and, not without difficulty, got admittance; keeping near the door he said: "You said I was mad, and you were right, for so I was, but you never told myself so, or said that of me till I was getting better. I am not mad now, but you are to go on misleading souls, never telling them of their lost condition, or of the way of salvation." The minister lifted his staff, and the boy fled. Having heard that copies of the Bible

were to be had on a small island thirty miles off, he traversed the space and crossed the ferry, only to find that each cost five shillings sterling, and he was poor, he had not one. His father taking compassion on him in his distress, allowed him to take some palm oil, out of a quantity which he had helped to save from the grasp of ocean, and get money to buy what he so much longed for. This involved another journey, also on foot, of sixty miles, for one-half of which he had to carry a burden on his back ; but it was cheerfully undertaken, as well as another to the island, where the books were to be obtained, and at length, after travelling one hundred and eighty miles, crossing a ferry four times, and paying his money, he got home with his treasure, as he counts it still, after a long lapse of years, during the last score of which he has proclaimed from the pulpit its blessed truths. Multitudes possessed of vastly superior external advantages were perishing on every hand, ignorant of its contents and neglectful of its claims. And how can we account for this ignorance and neglect ? The only intelligible answer is, because the natural man knoweth not the things of the spirit of God, they are foolishness to him, for they can be known only spiritually. The God of this world blinded their minds, lest the light of the knowledge of the glory of God should shine unto them, to give them the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. While he accepted the bible, and yielded to its instructions, not through any external evidence, he knew nothing of such, or of its historic or literary value, (he knew nothing of Joseph Alleine, he had seen only a few quotations from it in the writings of this, to him, unknown man, and had its main scope opened before him in these ;) but he accepted it as his guide, because God, in his sovereign electing love, confers on some as a favour that they are born again, have their understandings enlightened by the power of the Holy Ghost, have new desires, aims and hopes excited in them, and having heard and learned of the Father, they come to

Jesus, and thenceforth under His tuition and according to His promise, are being guided into all truth. This work is accomplished when God speaks to the people under Christ. Psalm xviii. 47. In a day of His power. Psalm cx. 3. When the Spirit is poured out from on high, then the wilderness becomes a fruitful field.

V. Diverse as are the forms with which God has clothed the creatures among which we have our existence, numerous as are the objects of His everlasting love in Christ Jesus, equally so seem to be the modes of the Spirit's operation in leading souls to the Saviour. If we look into our Bibles, we shall find that Peter's first prayer, when the Lord's character began to be understood, was "depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Luke, v. 8. Paul trembling and astonished said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts, ix. 6. The jailor of Philippi was about to commit suicide. Nor were such cases peculiar to Bible lands or times. To-day, as of old, He can say, "I am found of them that sought me not." Rom. x. 20. Some of those who desire not the knowledge of His ways, and wish Him to depart from them, yet find themselves suddenly, as if shaken by a terrible earthquake, or in the grasp of the hurricane, when, through the revelation of God, their fancied goodness is turned to corruption, and their own clothes abhor them, or their profanity or profligacy is shown in its true colours. I know one who in early days was a shepherd on the mountains, and who, when he noticed a God-fearing woman passing near his father's house on Sabbath morning, on her way to attend a small prayer-meeting, was wont to call out his dogs, that he might annoy her by swearing at them. "I had" (to use his own words) "a Bible, a neighbouring shepherd had a copy of 'Dyer's Famous Titles of Christ,' he proposed to exchange books. I cared as much for the one as for the other, and consented. I looked then into my book to see what kind of bargain I got, and the result was, that for a whole year I did no work. I would go out

of my father's house in the morning after breakfast, into a strip of wood which fringed the sea, spend the day there, and return at night ; and many a time have I seen my poor mother looking into the water, as she walked along the shore, fearing that I had made away with myself." When the woman he used to annoy heard that he had received the Gospel, which he has long adorned and still preaches, she exclaimed, " Surely, the latter day glory is near at hand." Another, who was for some time previous under the instruction of a Christian lady, dates his first deep conviction to his having dreamed that he was in hell. For months after this event he felt, as he told me, nearly useless, and often seriously contemplated giving up his situation, because he shrunk from taking wages, when he felt hardly able to do the work assigned to him. To these men, " old things had passed away," but it was long before they could say, " all things are become new."

It must not, however, be supposed that these are specimens of God's ordinary working ; evil has been done by the idea that conversion, if of any, is of inferior value, unless preceded by a terrible awakening, and a long period of darkness and sorrow. Neither the word of God, nor Christian experience countenances this impression. It is true that " they that be whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick," and that no one can rest on Jesus, as the Saviour of the lost, until he is so convinced of his sin and misery, as to feel that the word *lost* expresses his own condition, but it does not follow that the awakening must be very violent, or the agony, if begun, be very prolonged, ere the Saviour is accepted. The very opposite is taught in the narrative of the conversion of the woman of Samaria, of the thief on the Cross, and of the multitudes that believed, through the early preaching of the Apostles. The convictions of some of these were evidently sharp, " they were pricked to the heart," but they speedily closed with the offers of mercy. In the case of Lydia, they were neither violent, nor of long duration. God, it is said,

opened her heart, and before many minutes passed, she pressed on the preacher and his companions her hospitality, on the plea that she was a believer, and had been accepted as such. Indeed, save in the case of Paul, who was probably three days in that condition, we have not in the Scripture one instance recorded of a law work of one hour's duration. It is highly probable that some converts then, as in our own days, went through a protracted and terrible struggle, ere they submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. But seeing that we have no account of such cases, and that so many of a different kind are presented to us in the pages of God's word, it is surely unbecoming to insist that such an experience is at all necessary. We may feel (as one expressed it,) sin alive within us. We must be sensible of the burden of our guilt, and the presence of pollution, so as that we will mourn "every one for his own iniquities," and feel thoroughly humbled before God. Yet, let it not be forgotten, that what we need is not horrors of conviction, but Christ. I have known some who seemed in the deepest distress, who made, to all appearance, shipwreck of faith, and I have learned to regard those to be as safe, whom God wakens, as Cæsar Malan says God wakened him, as a mother does a sleeping child, with a kiss, as those who are roused by being shaken over the mouth of perdition. The great question for us is not, what was our experience before we came to Jesus, but have we come to Him? have we rested on Him for our own salvation? And do we evidence that; have we been born of God, created anew in Christ Jesus, unto good works, have to us old things passed away, and all things become new? Is our estimate of God and devils, of holiness and sin, of heaven and earth and hell, as different from what it once was, as if we felt that these had changed their natures? "I found it so," (as a friend expressed it.) "on that day" (the first day on which he looked forth a new creature), "everything seemed changed, the sun to shine brighter, the earth to be greener, the birds to sing

sweeter, everything seemed new." And with this expression Christian experience invariably coincides, though the impressions of the converted ones are not always equally distinct.

VI. The power of the Spirit is almighty. When He pleases to deal with a soul, for the purpose of bringing it to Jesus, He cannot be effectually resisted. This is not inconsistent with the fact, that some have resisted Him to the end, and that it may be said of some yet : " Ye stiff-necked, uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye." Acts, vii. 51. The truth is, every one resists him until he is made a new creature. Some trees are essentially barren, you may dig about them, and dung them, but they continue fruitless. Some stones have a certain combination of hardness and porosity, so that the surface crumbles beneath the stroke of the hammer, and no deep or lasting impression can be easily made; nearly all indications of the blows given such soon disappear under the influence of rain and atmospheric changes. And the Spirit declares that the natural heart is in a somewhat analogous condition, no deep, permanent, saving impression can be made on it; mere outward impressions are easily made, and as easily lost. Men tremble when they hear of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; or are almost persuaded to be Christians; or may, under a temporary impulse cry, " Hosanna, to the Son of David," seem willing for a season to forsake their people, and their gods, and to submit to worldly loss in doing so, who have never counted the cost of following Jesus, and who, when they awake to this, go back, not perhaps without regrets and tears, yet, thoroughly, to their people and their gods; or, as it is elsewhere expressed, " return like the dog to his own vomit again, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." What these need is not external treatment. Poultices and plasters and lotions are of no value in dealing with them. The constitution is like that of an

old broken-down drunkard, thoroughly ruined, and there is no remedy for them unless God in his mercy create them anew. It is deeply to be deplored that a large portion of the wise and rich, and noble of the world are among the fruitless. This is to be regretted, not only on their own account, but also because that others are thereby led to conclude that the claims of the Gospel must be wrong, and to silence all reasoning on the subject, as was done of old, by asking if any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him. But we know the value of this argument. We know that these reject Jesus, because their minds are blinded and their understandings darkened, through the hardness of their hearts. Those who are saved could as easily, and would, as readily and effectually, have resisted all commands and warnings and entreaties, had not the creative power of the Spirit been exercised on them; by this they were made willing, Psalm cx. 3. And He could have converted those who perish, as well as the saved, if He chose to do so, and He has proved this by taking a multitude that no man can number, out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation, people of all classes, of every degree of intellectual development and culture, of moral turpitude and refinement. Some of the most thorough idiots, of the most degraded savages, as well as some of the grandest specimens of humanity, have been brought to the feet of Jesus, amid scenes of the most widely different description. Some in the midst of heathenism, as the poor man, who when asked as he lay dying on the road, under the Indian sun, "Brother, what is the ground of your hope?" replied: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Some, as Colonel Gardiner, in the midst of lewdness, or John Newton, in the midst of profanity and trafficking in slaves, others like the thief on the Cross, amid mockery and blasphemy, or Paul when exceedingly mad against His name and cause. And all whom He thus deals with, He so unites to the Saviour (not

by fear of wrath or hopes of gain, although their fears and hopes are both appealed to, but by love), that it is thenceforth the earnest ambition of each, not to live to himself, but to Him who died for him, and who rose again. And if the weak and foolish and insignificant predominate in the Kingdom of God, that occurs solely because He hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. Yea, and the things that are not to bring to nought the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. The questions, why, when He could convert all, create all anew in Christ, He passes any by? why He deals in any way with persons, whom after all He allows to perish? and why He takes some rather than others, one of a city and two of a family, and brings these to Zion? do not fall within the scope of this paper. Those who wish to study them, will find them discussed in the Epistle to the Romans, ix, x, and xi chapters. Whether we understand these questions or not, and though we cannot harmonize all the doctrines of the Word of God, it is manifest that we should proclaim, as was done by our Lord himself, that unless a man is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God, and that fears, and tears and agonies, cries for mercy, a sense of relief, the persuasion of being in a saved condition, good resolutions, works, gifts, sufferings, even giving the body to be burned, constitute no claim for the forgiveness of sins, or acceptance with God. They are not even necessary or sufficient evidences of union to Jesus. Nothing avails us unless we are begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, born of incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever; and that the Spirit of God is able to transform children of the wicked one into children of God, so that the deepest dyed sinner, the very chief of sinners, may stand without spot or wrinkle before the throne.

VII. It is not an unusual thing for believers to be ignorant of the time of their own conversion. Some turn to God so early that the season is forgotten, some are

brought along such a plain path, the process of awakening and enlightenment is so gentle and gradual, that they do not observe when they pass the line which bounds the realm of darkness and enter the Kingdom of God's dear Son, while some have crossed amid such tumults, clouds and darkness, and have realized so little of God's presence, and been so tossed with doubts and fears, that they are long unable to know their calling and election of God ; wherefore we are called on to give diligence to make our calling and election sure. And it occasionally happens, that children of God have, long after their union to Jesus, been so much quickened and so filled with joy and peace, that they are ready to conclude that they were not converted before. We ought to know our union to Jesus to have an abiding assurance of our interest in Him, but ignorance of this only mars the comfort which the relation is fitted and designed to give—it does not prevent or destroy the relation itself.

In regeneration, the Spirit gives not merely new views, but new desires and aims, and rouses to new efforts. Sin is now not only shunned, but hated ; the duties of holiness are not only practised, but loved ; and the fellowship of God and His people is desired, not merely because there is no salvation except in this society, but because it is delightful in itself.

Those who have undergone this change thirst for God, the light of His countenance is their joy, and the hiding of His face the greatest tribulation that can befall them. When under it they feel the sorrows of death compassing them about, and the pains of hell taking hold of them. Yet, even in such circumstances, they have the witness in themselves that they are the children of God. Their very sorrows and their craving after Him are glorious evidences of their regeneration, though they may not be able to see that. "Know ye not," saith the Apostle, "how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Cor. xiii. 5. And, nevertheless, some of God's dear

children may, while they read these lines, be walking in darkness and having no light, unable, from one cause or another, to read their title clear to the inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; to each of these God graciously says, "Let him trust in the Lord, and stay himself upon his God."

VIII. In carrying out His work, the Spirit guides to an ever-growing dependence upon God, and for this end he often dries up the frames and feelings, in which they formerly delighted as precious evidences of their union to Jesus, and of which they were probably making too much. He comes to comfort; but, as a preliminary step, it is necessary that we should be thoroughly emptied of self, and one step towards that is the withering and drying up of these breasts of consolation, to which we were tempted to look, rather than to Jesus. The process of weaning us from these is painful, but He acts in kindness and tender mercy, that we may be thrown without any qualification on the Lord Jesus, and come to feel and grow like men. Foolish virgins, when they find these going fast, or gone (for they, too, have their pleasant frames and feelings), sometimes lament that they have not a deeper experience of their lost condition, more sorrow for sin and a more thorough repentance, as a preparation for coming to Jesus, instead of coming just as they are, and thus lose the opportunity given them, amid useless regrets that the Lord Jesus does not look on them as He looked on Peter. The wise, while, it may be, saying, "Oh, that it were with us as in the times that are past," are taught by the Spirit to look to Jesus in their necessities. They know that, had not Peter's eye been directed to Jesus, he could not have noticed the look that the Saviour gave him, or have profited by it; that Jesus looks now, looks always, on the erring as He looked on Peter, and that what ruins souls is that they are not looking unto Him; that looking unto Jesus is their duty in all circumstances and at all times, and that it is

only when they are doing so, that He is a power in them, that they can sorrow for their sins because committed against God, or that the Spirit can be felt in them as a well of water, springing up to everlasting life; and that inability to perform properly any of the various duties to which God calls them, though often pleaded as a justification of short-comings and neglects, if not of designed offences, can no more excuse them for such, than their wasting substance on riotous living would relieve them from all obligation to pay their debts to their fellow-men. These are taught by God not to wait for any preparation, or sense of power, or assurance of pardon and acceptance, before applying to Him when darkness gathers round them, and a sense of desertion, the hiding of His face, or other trouble comes upon them. These, instead of saying, "What profit is there in serving the Lord?" are led to gather round, as the disciples did on the Sea of Galilee, when they said, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" A sense of need, combined, perhaps, with thoughts of duty, and with real love, constrains these, in the moments when everything seems against them, to attempt to rest on Him as they did at first, and whosoever does so is sure to succeed. Some object to our urging anyone to try to rest on Jesus, seemingly in ignorance that He Himself said both to His disciples, and to the multitude, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," and that the Apostle Paul says to believers, "Let us labour therefore to enter into His rest, lest any one fail through the same unbelief," as ruined the Israelites.

IX. Again, the Spirit deepens the believers' sense of dependence, by giving them clearer views of both their guilt and their corruption. It is perhaps invariably a sense of guilt which presses on sinners at the first, and it comes over some like a horror of great darkness, before a sense of their corruption disturbs them in the least degree. Yet this does not long continue the Christian's chief burden. No one could ever have a right concep-

tion of either, unless God were revealed to him in Christ. He is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and it is only in His light that we can see light, and as this light brightens and we get a truer conception of both, corruption becomes a more terrible burden than even guilt, and the believer is then ready to say, like Job, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes;" and with Paul: "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." It is a great mistake to suppose that Christians think much of themselves, and despise others. They see themselves to be so guilty, that nothing less than the blood of the Son of God can take away their sins, and so polluted that the Holy Ghost alone can destroy their corruptions and folly, and this estimate increases rapidly as they advance in their Christian course. They confess their iniquity and their sin is ever before them; they feel that wash themselves as they may, they are vile, and unable to do one clean or right thing; they greatly need a comforter; and but for the presence and power of the Holy Ghost, they would sink into despair.

X. The Spirit comforts those who are cast down. He awakened within them at the first a hope of salvation, and when doubts and fears gather round, He does not abandon them; He is ever near; He will not allow them to be overwhelmed, but in due season, after they have suffered for a while, makes them perfect, stabilishes, strengthens, settles them, 1 Peter, v. 10; dispels all their anxieties, and cheers and comforts them. Doubts and fears are not parts of true religion, not fruits of the Spirit, not evidences of godliness; they are effects of sin, and we are liable to them while we remain on earth. It is part of the Spirit's work to destroy these, and it should be ours to rise above them to the full assurance of hope.

The hope of salvation is so necessary for the children of God, that it is called their helmet. No one can go through the fight without it, for we are saved by hope. This hope may be of various degrees of strength even in the same person ; sometimes it rises to the full assurance of salvation, and then our mountain stands strong ; but soon God may hide His face, and then the sorrows of death compass us about. But in whatever degree it exists, it rouses to effort. A minister in England once pressing on his hearers the duty of asking for the Holy Spirit, with a view to their salvation, spoke somewhat as follows : " God says ' if ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit,' He does not say, to His children, but ' to them that ask Him.' And now if anyone, even the most wicked person present, will try, God will fulfill His promise." One said to himself, " I am the most wicked man in this meeting, if it is true for me I will try." And he soon, and for forty years afterward, was as well known for godliness as he had been for profligacy and profanity. This hope never makes ashamed, because God sheds abroad a sense of love on their hearts by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. He puts on them the breastplate of faith, and love to Him. This is like a breastplate of iron, lined and padded with the smoothest, softest lining which God can furnish, so that the enemies' weapons can never harm the frame which is cased in it. Faith, once drawn forth, rests on a basis of love, so that it is impossible for unbelief to regain its old place and power. The believer's love to God is originated by God's love to him, wherefore they say, " We love Him because He first loved us ;" and we find Paul saying, " Who shall make us to cease from loving Christ, shall tribulation, or persecution, or peril, or nakedness, or the sword," " Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us: for I am persuaded that neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities,

nor powers, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"—Rom. viii. 35-39. Again, He comforts them by washing them with water through the Word. He prayed that they might be sanctified through the truth, the Word is truth, and for this end He makes them study and understand it, and He brings to their remembrance in times of need, and applies passages which they have read or heard, and which they may have long forgotten, or which had not previously attracted their attention, but which suit their particular cases. Moreover, He reveals to them their wants, and directs their prayers, assisting them specially, not in those prayers in which they have most freedom and liberty of expression, and which are regarded as shewing a gift of prayer, but in those poor, broken, inarticulate petitions which find vent in groanings which cannot be uttered. He strengthens them with might by His Spirit in the inner man, so that kept by the power of God, through faith, they can never be moved, never separated from the rock on which they are built, and in which they are rooted and grounded, but go forward from strength to strength, till everyone appears before God in Zion. He gives them assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein unto the end, making the joy of the Lord their strength, and witnessing with their spirits that they are the children of God, by shewing them in the description of His children which He presents in His Word, those dispositions which they now find growing up in themselves, and by that sense of communion with Him which He at times affords them. The gift of the Spirit is intended to supply to His people the blank caused by the absence of their Lord. And as they had fellowship with Him when He was on earth, and they shall have this when He returns; and as their very nature and their condition demands that they should have one to whom they can unburden

themselves in times of difficulty and sorrow, and who can thoroughly appreciate their joys, there is no reason to doubt that we may have, aye, and that some actually have, an abiding sense of His indwelling. The disciples, when the Lord was with them, were wont to return to Him to *solace* themselves in His company, and make His ear the repository of all their trials and triumphs ; but till His intercession within the veil is finished, till His people are all saved and sanctified, He sends His Spirit to supply His place on earth ; and much though we may long for the Lord's appearing, it is better for the Church meantime to have the Spirit than to have Jesus. The moment that He returns, all the work which the Spirit now carries on shall be at an end, and he that is filthy shall be filthy still, and he that is holy shall be holy still ; and we shou'd set ourselves to ask that we may be sensibly filled with the Spirit. If we feel this we shall fear no evil, though the mountains shake or be cast into the midst of the sea, though the thunders roll around us, or wars rise against us on every side, for our God shall be to us as a little sanctuary in which we shall be safe.

Finally, the promise of the Spirit is the great incentive to work. The world speaks of it as of a hindrance, as if God said it is the Spirit's duty to work, and therefore you must not do anything, or at all events, till you feel assured that He is working in you. While God is really saying to the ungodly, Work ! it is your duty to do so, whether you are able or not ; if not able you ought to be, and if you do not glorify Me by a holy obedience, you must perish forever. And to all who feel a wish to work for God, He says : Work, for it is the Spirit that inclines you to do so, and He will not mock you by withholding the necessary power, or in His own words : " It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure." God knows how hard the work to which he calls us is, and appears, to souls in darkness, and

how ready such are to despond in face of the mountains that stand before them. I do not know, indeed, if everyone experiences this feeling, or anyone, at all times. Moses does not seem to have felt it, when he offered himself as a leader of Israel ; or Isaiah, when he offered for the prophetic office. But Moses felt it forty years afterwards, and Isaiah, when he saw the glory of Christ, and for encouragement, God declares that all difficulties shall vanish before them, as when He says : " If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you," and again " Who art thou, O great mountain ? before Zerubbabel thou shalt be made a plain, and this neither by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." The prospect of success stirs up in common affairs, and what an encouragement to a poor soul, in a time of weakness, to be assured that, though he is but a worm,—yes, when he is a worm, and one of whom much evil may be said—yea, as one of the dead of Israel, yet he shall beat the mountains and make them as chaff ; that he shall ride on the high places of Jacob, his father, and soar over the precipices as on the wings of eagles.

Blessed be God ! instructed by Him, we cannot be left ignorant of the devices, and strengthened by Him we can resist all the wiles of the devil. The strength of the lion, and the poison of the serpent, are alike as nothing in our way. We can break the teeth of the one, trample on the head of the other, and come unharmed out of the struggle. When the Spirit of the Lord came on Samson, every obstacle gave way before him, the roaring lion, the armed hosts, the cords, the withes were powerless ; and when the Spirit returned the temple of the Philistines perished in his grasp, and the promise is, that he that is weak shall be as David, capable of bearding and crushing alike the bear, the lion and the uncircumcised. And not only so, but the house of David shall be as God, as the Angel

Jehovah, that is, as Christ. And shall we rest without being filled with the Spirit, with all the fulness of God? He is promised to them that ask. If He does not fill us now, the whole blame is our own, and if He dwells in us, we are now made the habitations of God, through the Spirit, even now Sons of God, possessors of the highest dignity to which creatures can possibly be advanced; and our God shall supply all our wants, out of His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.





CANADA

Presbyterian Church Pulpit.

BY REV. JOHN THOMPSON,

SARNIA.

PEACE WITH GOD; OR, THE WAY OF A SINNER'S
JUSTIFICATION.

THAT which renders salvation necessary is our *guilt and depravity*. Guilt is liability to punishment, as transgressors of God's law. Depravity is a tendency in us to forsake God and continue in sin.

To man considered as a *sinner*, i.e., both guilty and depraved, the Gospel brings a remedy, and its benefits are—(1) A change upon *man's relation to God and His law*—guilt being removed—sins forgiven, and the sinner brought into a state of acceptance and favour. (2) A change upon his *moral character*, wrought in him by the Holy Spirit, whereby his tendency to sin is subdued, and a new heart given. In other words, his *justification*—a relative change—securing his *title* to heaven; and his *sanctification*—a real change—through which his *meetness* for it is attained. These constitute the two great blessings of the Covenant of Grace which God bestows, the two gracious changes which He effects in us.

Being guilty, we need the sentence of condemnation repealed, and forgiveness for all our sins bestowed. And pardon for our offences is a subject of definite promise. God says, "I will cast all their sins behind my back." It is the assurance of this that enables us to praise Him as the God of our salvation.

Our state is also one of *defilement*. A spiritual leprosy has come upon us. We have the *stains* of sin as well as the guilt. Is there any provision for this? any means by which we can be made personally holy, and meet for the fellowship of the saints? This is also a matter of definite promise. God is debtor to His own Word to create clean hearts within us—to wash us from our iniquities—to sanctify the soul through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

* * * * *

"Dear, dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransom'd Church of God
Be saved to sin no more."

THE JUSTIFICATION OF SINNERS.

"Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone"

This subject bears directly upon man's relation to God, and his well-being for ever. How shall a sinner come into the presence of the Holy One? "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?" "How can a man be just with his Maker?" These questions are paramount, and, until solved, they arise only to alarm us. Until answered, we can have no

peace, and no soul-satisfying assurance in God our Father. But the same Gospel which affirms our guilt comes bearing the olive-branch of peace, shewing that God can be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly who believe in Jesus.

This truth is central in the scheme of grace. It is the fountain-head of our *peace*. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." It is the *origin* and *essence* of salvation. "Being justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." In the purpose of God it is linked to our *final glory*. "Whom He justifies, them He also glorifies." Peace, and salvation, and glory is the unfailing portion of every one who is justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Luther called justification by faith, "*The only solid rock,*" "*The article of a standing or a falling Church.*" On this doctrine the Church lives and flourishes in her strength and beauty, and when it is perverted or obscured her piety declines and her virtues languish.

But it has the same vital interest to the believer that it has to the Church generally. *The article of a standing or a falling hope, of a growing or declining spirituality.* Scriptural views on this subject will keep us right on almost every other, while all errorists are wrong as to the *ground* of a sinner's acceptance before God, and *the process through which* we become personally interested in Christ's righteousness.

Justification by grace, through faith in Christ, was the disenguishing doctrine of the *Reformation*, and the faithful preaching of it by the Reformers was the secret of their wonderful influence. Their characteristic work was the exposition of this truth in the light of Scripture. They removed the mass of rubbish that Popery had built around it, that men's faith might rest on Christ our righteousness, whose work in our room is the only ground of our justification.

The way of peace with God is the grand discovery of

revelation. A truth not merely contained in the Bible, but one for the sake of which the Bible was given. Is there any way to obtain pardon? and, if so, what way? One of the main designs of the Word of God is to furnish an answer to these questions, proving the sinner's justification by grace through faith, and its consequent privileges and blessings.

As a fundamental article, it requires frequent exposition. Milner, in his *Church History*, says:—"This article can never be handled or inculcated enough. If this doctrine fall and perish, the knowledge of every truth in religion will fall with it. On the contrary, if this doctrine flourish, all good things will also flourish, viz., true religion, the true worship of God, the glory of God, and the right knowledge of everything which it becomes a Christian to know."

This doctrine is fitted to meet and remedy the two great errors of the present time, viz., (1) A tendency towards *rationalism*, whose final resting-place is a dreary scepticism. (2) An opposite tendency towards *ritualism*, whose proper home is Popery. Rationalism and ritualism, while opposed to each other, agree in this, that both have forsaken the fountain of living water, and are hewing out to themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. They have rejected the righteousness which is of God by faith, and are seeking to work out a righteousness of their own. To correct all such errors, and bring men back to the faith of the Gospel, nothing will prove so effective as scriptural views regarding a sinner's justification through faith alone.

This is the Gospel message, which must be brought to bear upon the minds and hearts of each succeeding generation; and to every one who has been made to feel that he has sins to be forgiven, it will be as good news from a far country—the glad tidings of great joy. We are all under sin. There is none righteous; no, not one. Every mouth is stopped, and the whole world has become guilty

before God. Farther, it is impossible for man, by any means of his own, to justify himself. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." It is this proclaimed helplessness on our part that shuts us up to the faith, to rest all our hopes, and ground our trust on the Lord Jesus Christ. We are driven from every false refuge, and brought to accept the only remedy of God's providing, "That being justified freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, we may have abiding peace with God.

I.—JUSTIFICATION—THE NATURE OF THE BLESSING.

It is important to know what justification really is, and what it embraces. It may be considered in two aspects. (1) As an act on the part of God, complete and final, forgiving the sins, and accepting the sinner. And as a result of this, (2) A privilege on the part of man.

Justification is God's act. "It is God that justifieth." In Scripture, wherever the justification of a sinner is spoken of, it describes a change effected, not upon man's *moral character*, but only upon his *relation to God and His law*. It changes his *legal* standing alone by a simple act of acquittal. It does not make the subject of it personally holy by infusing righteousness, as Papists affirm, but reckons, accounts, pronounces righteous on other grounds.

1. *Justification is by faith alone.* "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

2. *Justification is of free grace.* "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ."

3. *Justification is on the ground of Christ's righteousness.* *What he did is set to our account.* "He wrought out a righteousness which is unto all, and upon all them that believe."

These statements are not self-contradictory, but are essential parts of the one grand truth. If the question have respect to the *origin* of justification,—it is of God's grace, undeserved on our part. If it respect the

ground of our justification,—it is on the ground of Christ's righteousness imputed to us. If it regard the *medium* of our participation,—justification is then said to be by faith.

When the righteous or innocent are justified, it signifies simply declaring them to be what they are. God Himself is said to be justified, but this cannot produce any change on Him. It is only a vindication of His character against all false accusations, and declaring Him to be what He always was, "righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works."

But when Scripture uses the term in reference to the guilty, the meaning must be very different. It cannot signify, declaring them innocent. That would be a lie. But the guilty are reckoned, or treated as if innocent or righteous, on some other ground than personal righteousness,—on some other obedience rendered than their own which they get the benefit of. This is its meaning in all the declarations and promises of the Gospel.

Romanists confound justification with sanctification. And they *are* inseparably connected, not only in the purpose of God, but also as a matter of enjoyment, and personal experience. All whom God justifies, He will also sanctify, and bring to glory. The one is never found without the other. In all who have been forgiven, a work of grace has begun. And all who are being sanctified, have been already justified. Yet, as Gospel blessings, they are distinct—differing in their *origin, nature, and results*.

Justification is God's *act*, pardoning the sins, and accepting the sinner.

Sanctification is the Holy Spirit's *work*, making him a new creature.

Justification removes the *guilt* of sin, and saves from condemnation.

Sanctification removes the *pollution* and love of sin.

Justification changes our *judicial relation to God and His law*.

Sanctification produces a change upon *our moral character*.

Justification is a sentence pronounced by God, *complete and final at once*, admitting of *no degrees of progression*.

Sanctification is *gradually progressive through life*.

Justification gives us a *title* to heaven.

Sanctification gives us a *meetness* for heaven.

Justification brings us into the *privilege* of God's children.

Sanctification gives us the *disposition and character* of children.

Justification is an act performed *without us*, never repeated or repealed.

Sanctification is a change wrought *within us*, by the Holy Spirit in His application of grace to the heart.

The former is a forensic sentence that produces not a *real*, but a *relative* change—a change not upon his *nature*, but only on his *legal standing*.

The latter is an *inward renewing*, by which we die daily unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

A man has certain grave charges brought against him. He may be guilty, or he may not. But it is evident, when the Judge passes sentence of acquittal, that this produces no change upon his moral character, but only in relation to the law under which he was arraigned.

So, when God justifies a sinner, it is quite distinct from his being made holy. It does not declare that the man is righteous, nor does it make him this. It is simply the sentence of the great Sovereign and Judge passed at once, by which He frees him from condemnation, and declares He will treat him as an innocent person, and not as a sinner.

That justification means *to pronounce a judicial sentence*, and *not to make personally holy*, is evident from its being contrasted with condemnation. "He that condemneth the just, and justifieth the ungodly, are an abomination

to the Lord." To justify the ungodly, must mean only to *pronounce* them just, not to *make* them holy, or it would not be an abomination. Again, "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" As condemning means pronouncing sentence, and not infusing wickedness into the heart, so justification is the sentence of acquittal, and approval, and not the infusion of holy principles.

Paul anticipates an objection that may be brought against this doctrine. Seeing it is by grace and not of works, shall we not continue in sin, that grace may abound? But on the supposition that justification means an infusion of righteousness, this question could not even have been imagined.

To be justified then, is not to be *made* righteous, but simply to be *accounted* righteous—a change of *relation*, and not of *personal character*. The one blessing is not a part of the other, though inseparably connected.

In the act of justification, two blessings are bestowed, The sinner is acquitted from every charge brought against him, and regarded as having fulfilled the law. i. e. (1). *The forgiveness of all sin*, and (2) *The acceptance of the sinner*.

1. *Pardon of sin.*

It is sad, but characteristic of a guilty world, for a felon to have sentence of death passed upon him. The moral instinct of man declaring he must not live. Society, for its own safety, sternly demanding his death. But let us rise from the human, into the sphere of the divine administration. Through sin we have broken God's law, and have come under its curse. The Great Judge of all has passed sentence upon us. We are in the prison-house of our iniquity, with nothing before us but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. Man is charged with apostacy and sin against God. The charge is well proven, for "there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth

good and sinneth not." "Death has passed upon all men, for all have sinned." "Knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade men." From such a curse and fearful doom the Eternal Son of God came to save us, and He is ever calling, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" Calling upon them who sit in darkness, to come and walk in the light of the Lord. There is a message from the king to bring out the prisoner, and strike his fetters off. Not a reprieve, but a full pardon. Not a commutation of sentence, but a cancelling of it. Not on the ground of merit, but through the forgiveness of sin. At the very moment that God justifies, He takes account of every transgression. He proclaims the fact of our guilt, but declares He will cast our sins into the depths of the sea, and remember them no more. Neither our sins, nor yet the law of God is ignored in the sinner's justification. God's law is magnified, and our sins, instead of being passed by, leaving it possible for them to meet us again, have all been atoned for, and punished in the person of our Great Substitute.

This is the Gospel of God's grace. The glad tidings of great joy. Liberty to the captive proclaimed, amid acclamations of praise from the hosts of heaven. Unconcern on our part is madness. Reader, will you remain under that curse, while listening to the gracious words of One who came to save us from it, and who Himself bore it amid sorrow and suffering, even unto death. Do not despise both the law that condemns, and the Gospel that makes known the way of pardon and peace.

Pardon places us in the very same relation to the law as if we had not sinned, absolving us from all guilt, not on personal grounds, but because of what Christ has done for us. It is not the pardon of *some* sins, while others remain, but emancipation from the penal claims of the law, henceforth to walk in a robe of righteousness that is entire, "without spot or wrinkle." It is full forgiveness of all sin. He does not reduce our account, and say,

"Write fourscore instead of a hundred;" but blots out the whole of the handwriting against us.

How very partial, and laden with conditions, is our forgiveness of a brother's offence. "Well, I will forgive him, but I do not wish to have anything more to do with him." But our blessed Lord never forgives with a grudge, nor says, "He will forgive, but does not want to see us any more." The same Saviour who forgives, ever guides, and keeps, and loves us.

When a sinner believes on Christ, he receives an interest in that atonement which was made for all his sins. The moment he believes, not a *part* but *all* are fully and for ever forgiven. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." It is an act that is final, and complete, and glorious. The justified are introduced into a state that is at once safe, and triumphant, and everlasting. The law that once condemned him now demands his release. "Loose him and let him go." The justice of God declares "There is now no condemnation."

God does not deal with us as a creditor, letting us off now, but producing our account at some other time with the interest of sin upon it—a fearful accumulation! He will not come against us with the demand "Pay that thou owest," Thou shalt not come out till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. He does not cancel one account and retain another, but frankly forgives all. This full pardon brings the sinner into the broad light of heavenly love, and puts the challenge in the face of every accuser, "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?"

2. *The sinner's acceptance before God.*

Our sins are not only forgiven, and freedom from punishment granted. We are brought into a state of *acceptance* and *spiritual communion* with God, to live before Him as his children, holding the title to eternal life—a right

to an inheritance and a home in that better country, ever bright and blooming with the beams of an eternal summer.

A prisoner is charged with some crime, but nothing can be proven, and he is discharged ; or he is found guilty, but through some mitigating circumstances he is pardoned ; or one condemned to death has that sentence commuted. But in none of these instances does the supreme power which grants pardon or commutation ever adopt the prisoner or provide for him. It only releases him. The prodigal may waste his substance in riotous living still, with none to pity him.

But when the Great Lawgiver sets us free, He treats us far more liberally and lovingly ! He does not give us a cold discharge, but becomes our Father, to lavish upon us the richest gifts of his home. "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." Blessed privilege ! boundless riches ! unfading glory ! transcendent honour ! And this honour have all the saints ! "Received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God !" — power given to become the sons of God.

Angels are the sons of God, the sons of the morning, who sang the birth-day hymn over the world's creation. Men are the children of God, because He daily loadeth them with His benefits. But this adoption of sons points to a different relationship, and one every way closer and dearer. It is not the restoration of a lost inheritance, but advancement to honours unknown before. Through the Son's assumption of our nature, "He who sanctifies, and they who are sanctified, are all of one." He belonged to the Royal Household of God. We, too, belong to it now. God is His Father, He is ours also, and the Son is not ashamed to call us brethren. "I go to your Father, and my Father, to your God, and my God."

Christ, and they that are Christ's, stand in this endearing relation to the Father, and the family home. And what blessings spring from this union of Father and chil-

dren ! How suggestive of that protection and provision which we daily need ! No condemnation, or liability to punishment ! Their sins entirely blotted out, and themselves received finally and unchangeably into the enjoyment of God's favour. They are adopted as children into His family. "And the only object to which all God's views concerning them, and all His dealings towards them are directed, is to promote their welfare, by making them more meet for the full enjoyment of His presence in heaven. He has virtually laid aside, as far as they are concerned, the character of a judge, and assumed that of a father."*

(1) This adoption implies a participation of the Divine nature, and a conformity to the Divine image. As the son often inherits the likeness and disposition of his father, so we, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image ; and because we are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we call him, Abba, Father.

(2) Again, sonship secures the enjoyment of the Divine favour, and makes us the objects of His love. He never loses sight of us by day or by night—never ceases to care for us, or provide for us. "He supplieth all our wants according to His riches in grace." In all His dealings towards us, He proves Himself to be our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not.

(3) As sons become the inheritors of their father, and enjoy the honours of the family, so when we are accepted as the children of God, all that the Father has becomes ours. Sonship implies heirship. "If sons, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. Thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through Christ." Though this is the day of their minority, the children of God have been begotten to a living hope

* Cunningham's Hist. Theol., Vol. II.

of an inheritance provided for them by the Father—an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

There is a rich provision for the heirs of God ! Who can tell its blessedness, when eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him ! Gratitude finds its fittest expression in the words of the Apostle John : “ Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the Sons of God. . . . Beloved, now are we the Sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

True, the curse was heavy, when, by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners. What a dark train of miseries it has dragged after it ! Many a guilty heart has spent itself here, and gone to endless woe. And still the picture has its bright side, bathed in heavenly beauty—an aspect refulgent in the light of a Saviour’s love. “ Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Many who were far off, have been brought nearer than ever. Having fallen, He has exalted them higher than ever. Having forfeited Eden, He has brought them into a wealthier place. Redemption through the blood of Christ does not bring us back to an earthly paradise, however blessed, but places us on the summit of glory, and makes us kings and priests to God. The Son of God coming in our nature, has thrown around us the endearments of His love, and united us to Himself in the bonds of an everlasting brotherhood, and we share sonship with the Son of God, and have with Him one inheritance—the same reward—the same home in glory with Him who is His Father and ours.

To be restored to Paradise, to enjoy its blessedness as Adam did before he fell, would be a wonderful deliverance. But those who are saved by grace, are brought

into a union closer and more endearing, with more of heaven in it, and a Father's love, and a child's trust. Saved by grace, we become the members of a nobler family, and wear the badges of a higher rank, and are the objects, even now, of a deeper interest to the angels in glory. The Captain of our Salvation does not bring us back to Eden to till the ground and to keep it, but to share with Himself an eternal weight of glory, and to reign for ever. Not saved from wrath only, but brought to live in His own presence—so distinguished that, in the ages to come, He will show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to us by Jesus Christ. God's adopted children! What an exaltation! Called to share His glory and honour! This is surely a high calling. Standing nearest the Throne, the redeemed occupy the place of honour in heaven.

Dear reader, seek your honour from Him. The rank to which He raises you is permanent. The royal titles are expressive of real conditions. The crown is unfading—the kingdom is everlasting.

Forgiveness of sin does not exhaust the blessing of justification: there is on the part of God the acceptance of the sinner. A sovereign does not feed a criminal, or clothe him. Far less will he adopt him as a member of his family, and confer the rights and honours of his own home. But this is what God does. When the rebel is forgiven, he becomes not only a subject, but a son. God confers upon him all the blessings of that heavenly home.

Pardon strikes off the chains of a galling servitude. Acceptance brings us into the liberty of God's children. Pardon delivers us from the power of the devil. Acceptance brings us into the central home of a Father's love.

Pardon saves from the curse of the law. Acceptance secures all the rewards and honours of obedience. Pardon strips off the rags and disgrace of the prodigal.

Acceptance puts a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.

Pardon saves from positive punishment.

Acceptance confers eternal life.

Pardon shuts the mouth of hell.

Acceptance opens the door of heaven.

It is a wonderful provision by which a sinner can be forgiven by a Holy God. But it is a fuller display of the riches of His grace that a sinner can be justified—forgiven and raised to honours more abundant than Adam had when he lived amid the loveliness of the yet unblighted paradise.

What a blessed completeness there is for a sinner, in the Gospel of God's grace! To His ancient people He said, "When I see the blood, I will pass by." But how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God.

Some have held that men were justified from eternity ; confounding God's purposes in the eternal councils with the execution and actual accomplishment of them. Justification pre-supposes faith in us, and is not passed till that faith is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. But, when accepted of God, we shall not come into condemnation again. "Whom He justifies, them He also glorifies." Others have gone to an opposite extreme, and say we are not justified till the final sentence at the last day. And no doubt, that will be a grand vindication of our justification before an assembled world—a full declaration of it by the Judge from the Great White Throne, when the righteousness of His people shall be brought out as the noon-day. But Scripture rests our justification on *our act of faith*. The very moment we believe and trust in Christ our passover, we are accepted of God, and the forgiveness of all *past* sins, carries with it the pledge for the pardon of all *future* sins also.

II.—THE GROUND OF A SINNER'S JUSTIFICATION—

Christ's righteousness.

The Moral Law, which demanded perfect obedience as the condition of life, is not lowered in its claims, nor is it modified in any way to suit us in our changed circumstances. This would be making provision for continuance in sin on the part of those whose sanctification Christ came to secure. God's law, being the exponent of His own character, could no more suffer change, than He could change His own nature, and become less just and holy than He is. The law's sanction is, "The soul that sinneth shall die." "The wages of sin is death." This is the eternal law of the Divine procedure, from which there can be no appeal. We have sinned, and come under this curse. We stand charged with sin before the bar of a Holy God. We have incurred the penalty annexed to transgression, and because of the very perfection of God's government, that penalty admits of no mitigation. Where there is transgression, there must be penalty. Where sin is, its wages must be given. None dare come to God and plead his own merits. "Deal with me as my life has deserved. I trust to the rectitude of my own conduct." Even if he could begin now and keep the whole law, yet, "What about the old score?" as Bunyan asks. The many sins of his past life! How are they to be atoned for, and on what ground forgiven?

When God justifies the ungodly he must have some way of vindicating the law which has been broken. And it is a vital point to determine, *what that ground is, to which God looks when He forgives, and on account of which He receives us as His children.* What is our plea as sinners needing forgiveness? What is it God has respect to, and from a consideration of which he blots out all iniquity?

The word of God is very definite and full in its answers. For Christ's sake alone—redemption through His blood—

peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ—only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us—what He did and suffered in our room. In order to escape the curse of sin, and attain to citizenship with all the saints, we must win Christ and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

To change the sinner's state from that of a criminal to a son, to bring him from a condition of guilt to one of legal righteousness, requires something more than a mere manifestation of Divine Mercy. What is done is not to reward the transgressor of the law at the expense of justice, but to justify the ungodly, and at the same time to magnify the law, and bring them into a holy city of refuge in such a way that not mercy alone, but even justice may stand on the side of the sinner, and throw out the challenge as a conqueror unfurls his flag of victory on the breeze. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

It is here where we learn our need of a Saviour, and the value and completeness of Christ's work who was, in the saving purpose of God, made our *passover*, and sacrificed for us. The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The great oblation that gave all other sacrifices their meaning and value.

Christ came under the law in the very same sense as those were under it whom He came to redeem. Had Adam kept the law he would have obtained eternal life on the ground of personal obedience. Salvation had then been by works. But he sinned and came under the curse. And when it is affirmed that Christ was made under the law it means that He lived under the very same conditions—that He voluntarily placed Himself under the same moral constitution as Adam was placed under, and in the same sense subject to the law. Being ordained of God to become the legal substitute of His people, He came under the

law in its covenant form. By taking upon Himself to deliver them, He had to endure the consequences of their sins, and bear the curse in His own body on the tree. Eternal life was to be merited through obedience—man fails—Jesus obeys the law—fulfils all righteousness, and on this ground we are accepted. He was under the law's curse to save us from condemnation, and under it as a rule of life that He might re-establish our right to Heaven. The sentence of the law is exhausted with respect to believers, for it has been executed upon their legal substitute who bore its curse to save them from hell ; who fulfilled its requirements that they might win heaven. This is His righteousness which He wrought out.

We speak of Christ's obedience as *active* and *passive*, though both complete the work the Father gave Him to do, and make up His "*one righteousness*." His active obedience is His fulfilment of the law as a rule of life. His passive obedience consists in His sufferings and death, when bearing the penalty of sin. These form the separate grounds of *pardon* and *acceptance*. Our sins are forgiven because Christ atoned for them. We are accepted into God's favour because He fulfilled the law that prescribes perfect obedience.

Imputation.

But what was the cause of Christ's sufferings ? Why did bitter anguish tear His spotless soul, and death come upon Him who was the Holy One ? It was the *imputation* of our sins to Him, and His becoming responsible for them. Our sins were, in the Divine reckoning, laid to Christ's account, and though personally holy He was treated as a sinner because He stood in the room of His people, and was made sin for them—He who knew no sin.

The justice of God is unchanged, the curse of the law remains. Sins are forgiven only on the ground of having been atoned for,—of punishment having been endured for them. Must the guilty be punished individually ? Has

each one to redeem his own soul? Alas the curse involves death eternal! Atonement is not in us!

But the Saviour takes our place, and saves us from the curse by bearing it Himself. He stood in the room of His people, and met all the demands of the law against them. When their lives were forfeited, He gave His life instead. He bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all, and He took away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. It is to this propitiation through sacrifice God looks when He pardons the sinner.

But Christ did not only meet all past claims, He satisfied all future demands also. His work was coextensive with our wants. His *righteousness* consists in his full *obedience* to the law, as well as His bearing the *penalty* of sin, and this obedience is the ground of our acceptance. We are pardoned because Christ *atoned* for our sins, and we are accepted because He *obeyed*, and we reap the rewards of His obedience.

As our sins were imputed to Him, and became the ground of His sufferings and death, so His righteousness—satisfaction and obedience—is imputed to us and forms the ground of our justification. He, though personally holy, was treated as a sinner, because He stood in the place of sinners, and took their liabilities. And we, though personally guilty, are treated as righteous, because His righteousness is imputed to us—reckoned to us—set to our account. The laying of our sins to His account did not make Christ a sinner, but only caused Him to be treated as such, being imputed *in a legal sense*. So Christ's righteousness does not become literally ours, or make us personally holy. There is no such transfer, or infusion of moral character; character is personal, and cannot be transferred from one to another, but Christ's obedience and satisfaction are set to our account, reckoned

to us in a *legal sense*, and we get the full benefit, as if we had done what Christ did—atoned for sin, and fulfilled all righteousness. A surety may pay our debts, or perform a meritorious service. The acts are wholly his, the merit all his, but as it was done by our surety, and on our account, we get the full benefit of it. Jesus Christ obeyed the law, He alone is the *Righteous One*. The acts of obedience are all His own, and can never become ours. But since He was our legal substitute it is held as ours. Those who believe in Him are, on account of what He has done, reckoned and treated as righteous. “He who knew no sin is made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him; according as it is written, let him that glorieth glory in the Lord.”

We must ever keep in view the ground of our justification—that to which God looks when He pardons and accepts us, viz., *the righteousness of Christ*—His full obedience to all the law's requirements as demanding *death* because of transgression, and *obedience* as the condition of eternal life. This is our only plea, our only sure rock and shelter, the great and effectual door that is opened for our entering in.

We cannot prove our innocence. The plea of acquittal cannot be made out on the ground of our personal claims. But there is a plea, in virtue of which justice demands that the condemned shall be treated as righteous, and thus, on the ground of Christ's full satisfaction, it becomes not merely a *merciful*, but even a *righteous* thing, to justify the ungodly, when by faith they rest on the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ. By His stripes we are healed. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin. These are truths that become powerful for our comfort and sanctification, as well as forgiveness; truths that inspire, and are breathed forth in our daily prayers, preached in our sermons, dwell in our memories, fill our creeds and confessions, permeate the

Christian life, and live forever in the testimony of all God's saints—the blessed truths that make His word a Gospel to us.

In Thee my heart, O Jesus ! finds repose ;
Thou bringest rest to all that weary are.
Until that Day-spring from on high arose,
I wandered through a night without a star ;
My feet had gone astray
Upon a lonely way ;
Each guide I followed failed me in my need ;
Each staff I leaned on proved a broken reed.

Thou art the great completion of my soul,
The blest fulfilment of its deepest need ;
When, self-surrendered to Thy mild control,
It enters liberty indeed ;
Thy love, a genial law,
Its every aim doth draw
Within its holy range, and sweetly lure
Its longings towards the beautiful and pure.

* * * * *

Oh ! may that light divine
On me still clearer shine—
A power, an inspiration from above,
Lifting me higher to Thy perfect love !

O how near the Son of God has come to us ! How closely He has identified himself with our fortunes ! “ In all our afflictions He was afflicted.” As prisoners of hope we come to Christ our righteousness, in whom we are accepted—in whom we are complete. He is our great representative, in whom we may fully and forever confide. Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, on whom our sins were laid. He has borne them all away.

Amid life's temptations and trials—when perplexed with daily entanglements—when desponding and faint-hearted, what solid comfort and assurance it should give us to know that our help is laid on One who is mighty, and whose heart can embrace all human sympathies, as His experience has taught Him to know all our trouble. Our

faith resting in the Great Redeemer, we may feel that we have committed our souls to One, who, while God over all, blessed for ever, is also the Great High Priest of our profession, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, whose heart throbs with emotion when He sees the needy multitudes, and is moved to tears when He sees the tears of others. He has an eye to pity, and a heart to feel, and a hand to help, as well as power to save and sustain us.

O for a realizing view of a Saviour crucified for us! It is not till we thus see Him, and put our fingers into the prints of His hands, and thrust them into His side, that we will fully confess Him. "Jesus, my Lord and my God." The believer's realization of the sure foundation on which he rests, is alone the unfailing source of his peace. Not the obedience of a mere man, but the merits of a Divine Mediator. The finished work of Him who is Jehovah's fellow. The child of God has confidence, and is not ashamed, because clothed with robes on which there is no spot—the righteousness of the man, Christ Jesus, who is God over all, blessed for ever. Had the command remained: "*Do this and live*," instead of "*Believe and live*," then the door of Heaven had been closed against us. Rely on yourself, and you can have no true peace, and no hope of salvation, except what at last can only make you ashamed. You can neither merit God's favour, nor quiet your own consciences.

"No hope can on the law be built
Of justifying grace,
The law that shows the sinner's guilt,
Condemns him to his face."

But why seek to trust in your own righteousness, when another righteousness has been brought in—when everything has been done for your forgiveness and acceptance. God's law has been satisfied—a personal obedience has been rendered to it—a justifying righteousness has been

already accepted—a righteousness that is availing for us, even when our own is as filthy rags—a righteousness that even magnifies the law of God, and which becomes fully ours, on our simply receiving it by faith. Thus we come to rest on the rock of ages, from which nothing can cast us down through all eternity.

“Jesus, how glorious is Thy grace,
When in Thy name we trust,
Our faith receives a righteousness,
That makes the sinner just.”

“Rock of ages cleft for me,
O let me hide myself in Thee,
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side that flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”

III—THE MEANS OF A SINNER’S JUSTIFICATION. “*Justified by faith.*”—

As a *condition* of life, the law of God has been obeyed by One who took our place. Its holy sanctions have all been vindicated by Christ our surety, and thus He is the end of the law for righteousness, (*i. e.*, as a ground of justification) to every one that believeth. When a sinner is justified, it is on the ground of Christ’s imputed righteousness, and all gracious affections flow from this adoption as its result, but never form the ground of the adoption itself.

God sent redemption to His people. Salvation has been brought near us. Dear reader, do you ask: “How can I appropriate to myself the rich provision of the Gospel? How can I place my foot on the sure foundation, and like John, lay my head on the bosom of my Saviour? In what way does Christ’s atonement and obedience avail for me? How can I appropriate to myself that blessed legacy, which He, as my Benefactor has left for me? What is the bond of union between me and the Redeemer?”

Man naturally wishes to merit salvation, and buy the *gift* of God with *money*. He is so very reluctant to confess himself a debtor to God's grace. It is so humbling to his pride, for him to accept eternal life as the *gift* of God, and he asks: "What must I *do* to be saved? What must I *do* to inherit eternal life? What shall we *do*, that we may work the works of God?" And Jesus answers: "This is the work of God, that ye *believe* on Him whom God hath sent." How brief and simple the statement! Our duty is shortly told! Not to do some great thing, but to *believe* on Him!

It is by faith alone that we lay hold of Christ, and rest in His fulness. Justified by faith without the deeds of the law—Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith—authority is given to become the sons of God, to them who *believe* on His name. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. This is the Divinely appointed means by which we are pardoned and accepted of God. "The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling."

Who is justified before God? *How* is he justified, and *when*? *What must he do* to be justified? *Faith* is the answer to all these questions. Who is justified? He who believes on Jesus, and all who believe. When is he justified? The very moment he believes; all his sins are then fully and forever forgiven, and he shall never come into condemnation again. What must he do to be justified? Only believe. He is justified by faith. If we believe in our hearts we shall be saved.

It is here we reach the point that gives us an interest and personal resting in Christ's finished work. And no righteousness can avail but the righteousness which is of God by faith. No garments can cover us but the robes of a Redeemer's righteousness, on which there is no spot. Faith in Christ makes us one with him,—complete in him.

1. *The nature of justifying faith.*

What is this principle, to which so much importance is attached? on which so much turns as being the very root and ground-work of personal religion? The questions, *What is it to believe on Christ* to the saving of the soul? *What is the nature of Faith?* have given rise to many keen discussions in the Church. On this point a flood of theological controversy has been emitted, like the flood which the dragon sent forth to swallow up the woman. The Church of Rome makes faith to consist in *mere belief—the bare assent of the understanding*. Certain doctrines are affirmed, and faith is our receiving these as true, as we believe the proposition that 2 and 2 make 4.

But faith must be more than mere intellectual belief, or naked assent to the truth of God, for then all who believed the statements of the Bible as historical facts would be justified. Faith is a matter of the *heart* and *will*, as well as of the *head* and *understanding*. "It is the fruit of an interview between the spirit of God and the spirit of men." The bond of union on our part between the soul and the Saviour. It is the sinner's great act of reception of all Gospel blessings—of all saving influences. The hand that lays hold of the merits of Christ, and makes them his own. It is the way in which an imputed righteousness becomes my righteousness—a Saviour becomes my Saviour. It includes the *assent* of the understanding, but also, and chiefly, the *consent* of the affections. It is a *looking to* Christ, as the wounded Israelites looked to the brazen serpent—a *receiving* Christ as you would a friend, with a heart-affection. "A receiving and resting upon Him alone for salvation as He is freely offered in the Gospel."

When our Lord said to the woman, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; thy faith hath saved thee," did he mean that her opinions and mere belief of certain statements had saved her? Or when Paul declared that the life which he now lived in the flesh was by the faith of the Son of

God who loved him, and gave Himself for him, are we to understand him as asserting that his spiritual life was nourished by his theoretical creed about the Son of God? Surely these words are not interpreted, and their earnest meaning filled up by this view of faith.

Undoubtedly knowledge is an element of faith, for how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? But this view of it is only partial, and leaves out one of the main elements, even *trust in a person*. For me to believe in Christ is not only to give my assent to the truths that are revealed concerning Him, but, through this as the medium, to *confide in Himself*—an act of self-surrender that commits my soul to His keeping, begetting in me the conviction, more or less strong, that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him; and amid all counter influences to seek only unto Him. “Lord, to whom can I come but unto Thee, Thou alone hast the words of eternal life.”

When we come to an unfamiliar word, to get at its meaning, we take our dictionary and find it explained in simpler terms. Let us take the Word of God and see the numerous definitions and explanations of *faith*. There saving faith is equivalent to *resting upon* Christ—*laying hold* of Christ—*flying for refuge* to Christ—*coming to* Him—*trusting in* Him—*receiving* Him—*looking to* Him—*to be found in* Him—*to live in* Him. It is not mere intellectual assent to truth, but, over and above this, *trust in a personal Saviour*. The Gospel concerning Christ not only apprehended, but heartily embraced and appropriated. Not a formal assent to historic and doctrinal facts merely, but with our will and affections embracing the Saviour and making Him our own. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” Saving faith is a hearty trust worked in us by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. It is the soul’s response under the touch of the Spirit,—our hold of Christ and reliance upon His righteousness as the ground of our acceptance before God.

2. *The sinner is justified by faith alone.*

This point is fundamental, and marks sharply off the Reformed from the Romish Church. True it robs us of all self-righteousness and self-trust ; but it brings us to a sure resting place, which can never be disturbed. When we have won Christ, and are found in Him, we feel the eternal security of that divinely appointed refuge whose very name is a strong tower.

Romanists place faith alongside of other graces, such as love, fear, penitence, a purpose of receiving the sacraments, and of living a holy life ; making faith simply co-ordinate with these, and ascribing to them an equal efficiency in our justification. Faith does not, according to them, stand in any relation to justification different from these graces. In other words, they deny that *faith alone justifies*, and thus leave room for their own obedience and good works, and penances, and human merit, supplementing Christ's work. Their own obedience, together with His, thus forms the complex ground of their forgiveness. Yea, through their works of perfection and supererogation they can even go beyond the law's requirements, and heap up merit in store, which avails for the forgiveness of others.

Alas, what a perversion of the way of peace ! What a complicating and darkening of the Gospel simplicity ! Scripture expressly excludes works from the ground of our justification, and affirms that sinners are justified by faith alone—that it is the only thing in us, to the exclusion of all personal righteousness—of all good works and gracious affections—to which our forgiveness and acceptance with God are ascribed.

O, it is a blessed discovery, when we learn to feel that God is the friend of all who *believe* in Jesus ! That our Great Substitute has wrought out a righteousness to the full benefit of which we are entitled when we receive Him as the propitiation for our sins ! That the work of God is

to *believe* on Him whom God hath sent. The just shall live by *faith*. By Him all that *believe* are justified from all things.

"I sought day and night to make out the meaning of Paul ; and at last I came to apprehend it thus : Through the Gospel is revealed the righteousness that availeth with God. A righteousness by which God in His mercy and compassion, *justifieth us* ; as it is written, '*The just shall live by faith.*' Straightway I felt as if I were born anew : it was as if I had found the door of Paradise thrown wide open. Then I saw the Scriptures altogether in a new light. The expression, '*the righteousness of God,*' which I so much hated before, became now dear and precious—my darling and most comforting word. That passage of Paul was to me the true door of Paradise. . . . One thing that began to trouble me was whether I had the right kind of faith. Old definitions of faith recurred to me, by which faith is said to be nothing unless it is informed with charity, and developed into good works, so that when it saith we are justified by faith, the part is taken for the whole—and it means by faith, also hope, charity, all the graces, and all good works. But Brother Martin declared it meaneth simply *believing*. He said, "Faith is an almighty thing, for it giveth glory to God, which is the highest service that can be given to Him."*

3. *The way in which Faith justifies.*

We are so very reluctant to give up all merit, and trust wholly in Christ for our justification, that we suppose it must be *on account of our faith*, and imperfect obedience that flows from it, that God accepts us. But Scripture nowhere says man is justified *on account of faith*, but only *by or through* faith, and there can be nothing meritorious in that which is only the instrument through which Christ's righteousness becomes ours.

* Chronicles of the Schonberg Cotta Family, p. 141.

While there *is* a kind of merit, independent of anything external, in charity, benevolence, or veracity, yet faith from its very nature is that grace which looks beyond itself and relies upon the merits of another. It is only the means by which we appropriate Christ and his benefits. "It behoves us to guard against the notion that faith itself has a certain kind of merit, that as an indwelling quality of a man, it made that man so well pleasing in the eyes of God that *therefore* God counted him to be righteous, in which case man would indeed have a righteousness in himself, that is in his faith. Whereas the believer has *no* righteousness in himself but only in Christ, his faith being but the *means* whereby he appropriates Christ and His righteousness making them his own."*

Justification is of faith, that it might be by grace, and this method of grace robs us of all merit in ourselves, and leads us to look to *the object of faith*—that which it lays hold of, and which alone forms the ground of God's act of justifying, viz., *Christ's imputed righteousness*. The office of faith is simply that of an *instrument* or *means*—the hand that accepts Christ—receives and rests upon Him.

The righteousness of Christ becomes ours *through our union to Him*. Forgiveness involves more than a simple discharge; it is forgiveness based on propitiation made for sin. It rests on what our Substitute did and suffered when He gave Himself a ransom—on what He undertook and accomplished for the sinner. And all this becomes his when he is united to Him—made one with Him.

When we believe on Christ, all that He did and suffered is laid to our account, *i. e.*, regarded as ours—imputed to us. In ourselves we are guilty and deserve punishment, but He is our surety and is made unto us righteousness. Faith forms the bond of union between us and Him. We are ingrafted into Him—planted together with Him—

* Foundations of our Faith.

buried with Him—clothed with Him—one with Him. As He was identified with us in our sin and misery, when He was the man of sorrows—the one on whom the Lord had laid our iniquities: so we are identified with Him in His righteousness, and in the future we shall share His kingdom, crown and glory. It is Christ's obedience unto death that God imputes which alone is meritorious, and faith only receives it as our own.

Christ and His Church are espoused. She is the bride married to Him. Faith forms the bond of union. A wife, through marriage, becomes one with her husband, and interested legally in all that he possesses; but not as a reward for having received him. So believers are heirs of God, not in their own right, but as being joint heirs with Christ—justified, not as the reward of faith, but the reward of the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Justification, with all its privileges and blessings, is the gift of God, and not merited by us—justified freely by His grace. An act of His free sovereign mercy, unfolded with all the unconditional freeness and richness of His love. The function of faith is just to realize our personal interest in Christ's righteousness, and have full reliance on it as if it were all our own. It is in this way that we avail ourselves of Christ's atonement—that we appropriate Him, and then all that He merited becomes ours as if we had merited it. It is through our trust in Him that we have growing convictions of His wisdom, holiness, grace, salvation, till we feel our conscious union and communion with Him, and thus we learn to look to Him as our Substitute and Saviour.

We hear confessions like the following:—"Yes, a great deal depends on faith, but mine is so weak, I cannot grasp the promises, or take a firm hold of the *Faithful Promiser*—I feel I cannot be saved."

Dear reader, It is not the strength of your faith that saves you, but the strength of that Saviour to whom it brings you—the perfect righteousness in which it leads

you to trust. It is as a vessel, you cannot receive Him until you are emptied of self.

“ Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling.”

Eternal life is the *gift* of God, and faith is our acceptance of that gift. It is not the mere abundance that gives a beggar a right to satisfy his wants, but the free offer made to him, and he has no merit in reaching out his hand to receive a gift. Neither can there be any merit in our consenting that Christ should do for us, what we could never do for ourselves—no merit in our reliance on His obedience, and yet this reliance is of the very essence of faith. In accepting Christ as our Saviour, it is only the hand of a beggar stretched out to receive an alms.

How then does faith justify? Not as a ground of merit, for every such element is carefully excluded. Not as an equivalent for obedience—something which God accepts instead—not as a work of law; for we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law. We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ. He who believes in Jesus is in possession of a full discharge from the law's every claim, and has a right to all the rewards of a perfect obedience, but faith neither merits the discharge nor establishes the right, it merely, as the channel, conveys the blessing of an imputed righteousness.

A city is besieged—the garrison resist for a time: but finding they can hold out no longer, they surrender. So the natural heart is shut against Christ. He stands and knocks for admittance; and faith in us is just that great act of self-surrender—that quiet yielding up of ourselves to Him. We do not seek forgiveness: we are in sin, and love it, and mean to love it. But Christ, by His Spirit, changes our hearts, and gives us hatred of what we once loved, and love of that which we once hated. The grace of God begins in our hearts before our penitence begins.

It is by bringing the grace of this redemption into our hearts that makes us penitent. It is Christ's love that constrains us—His going after us—giving Himself for us—the Holy Spirit melting our hard and stony hearts, and uniting us to Him who is our life.

“ No more, my God, I boast no more
Of all the duties I have done ;
I quit the hopes I held before,
To trust the merits of Thy Son.
The best obedience of my hands
Does not appear before Thy throne ;
But *faith* can answer Thy demands,
By pleading what my Lord hath done.”

Dear reader, have your sins been forgiven, and are you now an accepted child of God? No longer a criminal! not even a servant, but a son? Seek to make this a felt reality, a daily experience through the quiet soul-resting in the love of your Father. *Peace with God!* O what a blessed change! what a legacy! the earnest of all other good things. God now looks down upon you daily, not to overpower you with the displays of a kingly splendour, but looks as a Father, with love and compassion in His heart, holding us by the hand—helping us—comforting us. Learn to look up to Him in child-like faith, and trust and call Him, “Our Father who art in Heaven.”

“Being justified by faith, *we have peace with God.*” The dark clouds of Divine wrath melt away into quiet summer sunshine, and beneath the smiling sky of an ever-watchful providence, the Father has received back the prodigal to a long and lasting embrace. The enmity of our hearts is removed. This peace comes into our daily life as the light of the morning, when the darkness has passed away, and it purifies the affections we daily cherish towards our Father. The light from the sun streams in through the windows, and beautifies and cheers the room. So faith is as a window in the soul of man, through which light and blessing come to us—the splendours of a spiritual

sunshine are transmitted in increasing effulgence, to enlighten, and warm, and bring summer to the heart; and through which the soul looks out upon Christ and His beauty, beholding the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

Justified by faith, the frowns of insulted majesty give place to the smiles of complacency. A loving Father takes the place of an offended God. A throne of judgment is transformed into a throne of grace. The present has no slavish fear, and the future no forebodings, and the Redeemer receives us as His portion. Fear gives place to confidence—enmity is changed into love—sinful estrangement into spiritual communion—rebellion to loyalty of heart. And as the placid waters mirror the grandeur of the over-arching heavens, the believer's inner feelings and experience become filled with the reflection of a Father's face, and peace and promise fall upon his heart. True, he is not saved from trials and afflictions, though they all bear a changed character, and come as fatherly chastisements—expressions of His interest and love—a salutary discipline, training us for a higher and truer discipleship.

It is a Father's hand that leads us now, making all things work together for our good. Giving us not what we *want*, but what we *need*. His pure and loving eye ever watching us—the guidance and strength of His personal presence. And what a dignity there is in the consciousness of such a presence! "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." It is this that elevates, comforts, guards and guides us. We have a home now; and such a home! filled with the attractions of His own Fatherly presence. Made so familiar by the residence of His Son, who, as our Saviour, has gone to prepare it for us.

If a sparrow cannot fall without His notice, we need not fear, who are of more value in His sight. He who clothes the grass of the field, and paints every little flower

that opens out to kiss the sunshine, will surely provide for all our wants, according to the riches of His grace. Every little bird sings God's promises to us—every blooming flower preaches them; the green grass that we walk on reminds us of their veracity and fulness.

Have you been made a child of God through faith in Christ? Think of the certainty of your glorification. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. "Whom He *justifies*, them He also *glorifies*." It is not a temporary affection, but the outflowing of an eternal love with which He draws us. These are the promises of a Father—the provision of a Father—the earnest, yet loving instructions of a Father—the protection and security of a Father. "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." So that we may boldly say, "*The Lord is our helper!*" We are not strangers and foreigners now, but children in the royal home. Not afar off, but beneath the care and within the fold of Israel's Shepherd, where there are defences, and foundations, and eternal security.

It is now we learn to run with patience the race that is set before us. It is now that mercy and truth are seen to meet together, and in those change relations and feelings, we look up to God and say, "Though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away and Thou comfortest me. Behold God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and song; He also is become my salvation."

Reader, these blessings are within your reach. They have been the great and only legacy of many of God's dear children. After taking full account of all the hypocrisies, self-deceptions, and inconsistencies which mar the life of many, you will still find those who are living on terms of solid and abiding peace with God, which they are illustrating in their lives, and will prove the efficacy and blessedness of in their death. We are not overreached by those who have gone before us. The fountain is still pure and

efficacious. Like the waves of the ocean, it never becomes polluted, though thousands of miry streams flow into it from human guilt, carrying down with them the *detritus* and slime of many a wicked life. Do not go to Abana or Pharpar, Christ's blood alone can wash your sins away. The redeemed in glory—the great multitude which no man can number, have washed there, therefore are they before the Throne, and serve God day and night. The adoration of the Church triumphant has its expression in that new song, which, like the majesty of rolling thunder, is heard in every region of that better country,—in every mansion of that heavenly home. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”





CANADA

Presbyterian Church Pulpit.

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER TOPP, D.D.,

MINISTER OF KNOX CHURCH, TORONTO.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.



THE grand design of the mission and work of Jesus Christ is the salvation of sinners of mankind. He came to effect their deliverance from the guilt and punishment, the pollution and power of sin—their exaltation to holiness, and to heaven at length. Accordingly, His religion is not, and never was intended to be, a system of external ceremonies and forms, but a controlling, overmastering principle in the heart and life.

Hence it is, that the rites and ordinances of the Christian Church are few, and, at the same time, simple in their nature. No one can read the narratives, or the Epistles of the New Testament, without being struck with the absence of everything like pomp, or display, or any attempt to impress the mind by gorgeous acts of worship, or by an imposing ceremonial. The teaching of Scripture is altogether of a contrary kind, even in the direction of simplicity in the ordinary means of grace, and, likewise,

in the symbolical observances of the Church. Yet, so far from losing in real effect, and in solemnizing, sanctifying power, their very simplicity—their freedom from outward show, as they were originally instituted, only serves to bring out more clearly and vividly their great value and significance, and, at the same time, to remind us how necessary it is that the truth as it is in Jesus should become dominant in the heart, and all-pervading in the life.

The symbolical ordinances, or, in ordinary language, the sacraments of the New Testament Church, are ordinances representing to all the fundamental truths of the Gospel, and sealing, to such as receive them in faith, the precious blessings of the everlasting covenant. They are, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism, having been once administered after the Scriptural injunction, is not to be repeated. It is the initiatory rite of admission into the Church, and, from its very design, it is evident that it is not intended to be made use of again. Hence you read of it—"Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The Lord's Supper, on the other hand, being an ordinance for strengthening, and encouraging, and building up the believer, is to be frequently observed. Accordingly, the apostolic command regarding it is—"As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come."

It is of the latter that we have now shortly to treat. And, first, we notice—

I.—THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ORDINANCE.

The great importance of the Lord's Supper we may learn from several things connected with its appointment.

1. *The time, and the circumstances in which it was instituted.* It was on no ordinary occasion. It was on the eve of His crucifixion—in the immediate prospect of, and

with reference to, that event—His death on the cross at Calvary, which is the source of all true peace, and hope, and joy, and blessedness upon the earth, and which shall for ever form the theme of gratitude, and unceasing praise to all the inhabitants of heaven. He Himself, who is the sum and substance of this ordinance, had before Him sufferings and agony. with regard to which He gave utterance to the anxious thought, “Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.” What He had to pass through and endure was as well known to, and as clearly anticipated by Him, as if He had been in the very midst of it. Yet, on the near approach of it, and overlooking all, as it were, in the absorbing desire to provide for the comfort, and to promote the welfare of His beloved people, for whom He was about to lay down His life, He proceeds to institute this ordinance to be observed in His Church to the end of time, and to be the means, as it has in multitudes of instances proved itself to be, of imparting light, and refreshment, and consolation to the saints of God, as they prosecute their journey to their Father’s house. The hour and the power of darkness had already cast their shadow over Him and around His path. But it checked not, in the least degree, the ardour of His love toward His own. On the contrary, His interest in them seems only to have become all the more intense; and as He gathered His disciples around Him on that memorable night in the large upper room in the City of Jerusalem, we cannot but feel that what He then did, and what He then appointed, ought to come home with unfading power to every heart which beats with emotion towards Him, whose love many waters could not quench, neither could the floods drown.

2. We may learn the great importance of the Lord’s Supper *from the words which He uttered, when, on the occasion of its institution He sat down with the twelve.* They had assembled, by His directions, in the place where they

were, in order to celebrate the distinctive rite of the Old Testament dispensation, viz., the Feast of the Passover. No sooner had they commenced to partake of that feast, than He said to them, in the fulness and fervency of His heart, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."

Why, then, did He so emphatically say that He longed with intense desire to eat this passover with them on the last occasion on which He could do so? Plainly, because He wanted to show them the fulfilment of that typical feast in His own death, as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, and to institute this Gospel ordinance in which the passover was to be merged and done away. His words, too, which we have quoted, clearly indicate that the institution of the Christian passover was not a thought of the moment, or a mere hasty resolution arising out of the peculiar situation in which they were, but a settled, deliberate purpose which had been in His mind all along, like every other part of His mediatorial work, and to which He looked forward with intense delight. Yea, we are warranted in regarding Him as thus rejoicing in His death, not on its own account, for His human nature, like ours, recoiled from suffering; but because through it the works of the devil were to be destroyed, the prince of this world was to be cast out, and the ransomed Church of God for ever saved.

Now, we cannot thus view the institution of the Lord's Supper as taking the place of the ancient passover—as an emblem of that more glorious redemption of which *it* was the type to the Church of old—as a special part of the Divine provision for the nourishment and building up of His people in every age, and as so filling His mind even in the midst of circumstances most painful and trying, that He expressed His longing desire for the coming of the period of its appointment—we cannot reflect on all this, and fail to be impressed with the conviction, that if there is one ordinance more than another, which ought to com-

mand our deepest sympathy, and our most fervent anxiety to share in the benefits thereof, it is this holy ordinance, which is designed to commemorate a love, the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of which we can never adequately explore, and by which alone any of us can be privileged to tread the streets of the New Jerusalem.

3. We may also learn the importance of the sacrament of the Supper, *from the avowed object of it*, as declared by the Apostle. This is, to shew the death of Christ—to hold it up before the view of all as the grand, central truth of revelation, the source of all that is gracious and hopeful to this dark world, and to its rebellious inhabitants. The cross or the death of Christ is, we are told, that by which things in heaven and things on earth are to be reconciled. “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” It is the centre of attraction to all the scattered members of the body of Christ throughout the earth—however separated they may be by distance, by nationality, by colour, by sentiment, or other things. *Here* at the foot of the cross, they are all one in Jesus Christ. *Here* they all make one common confession, viz., that there is salvation in none other but in Christ. *Here* they all become partakers of one common hope. *Here* they all acknowledge one Lord, and profess to be the members of one common family, the children of one common Father. Surely, then, by all who hope to be saved through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, it ought to be regarded as one of the highest external privileges pertaining to them, to bear their part in holding forth and perpetuating the remembrance of that death which is the grand object of their faith, and the foundation of all their confidence. “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

4. We may further learn the importance of this holy ordinance, *from the manner in which it has ever been re-*

garded by the people of God. Wherever the Church of Jesus Christ has obtained a footing—wherever the Gospel has become effectual to gather any souls to the Lord, and thus to lead to the formation of a society of such as believe in and love the Saviour, *there* this sacred memorial of the ground of all their hope and spiritual joy has been observed with deep reverence and delight. It is not an ordinance for one Christian Church more than another—it is not the table of one denomination or portion of the visible Church more than another, but it is the Lord's table, for all who welcome with cordial faith the glad tidings of salvation, for all who supremely love the Lord, and can say in truth, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

In heaven there is no discordant note. There is but one mind—the overmastering apprehension of the dignity, and excellence, and glory of the great Redeemer—there is but one heart, the outgoing of supreme love to Him who loved them with an everlasting love—there is but one voice, the harmonious, unceasing hallelujah of praise, "Salvation to our God, and to the Lamb that was slain." And on earth, in this imperfect state of the Church of God, if there is any rite in which the bond of common love to the one Lord does tend to repress all differences of sentiment on non-essential points—all diversities that are of man's and not of God's making, and cement believers in the same brotherhood, as united to the same Elder Brother, feeding on the same heavenly manna, and drinking out of the same fountain of living water, which proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb, it is this precious feast of the Christian passover. And oh! surely it is a cheering thought to us, as we gather around the table of the Lord, that there we are permitted and enabled by divine grace, to swell the numbers of those who declare that they are not ashamed of the cross of Christ; that, on

the contrary, they rejoice in Him as their great King and Head, binding themselves to fight His battles, to maintain His cause, and to honour all His laws. We thus appear as part of the professed, recognized army of the Lord—we affirm that it is our highest ambition to be soldiers of the cross, to be one with the saints in heaven and the saints on earth, to be followers of them who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises.

Now, if such is the importance of this holy Sacrament, none, who do really feel their need of the salvation of the Gospel, and are seeking to be found in Christ, clothed with His righteousness, and sanctified by His Spirit, will view it otherwise, than with anxious desire to honour Him therein. If you are right-minded toward the Lord, (*i. e.*) willing to be shut up into the faith of Christ, fleeing from every other refuge to the only refuge from the storm,—ready to take up the cross, and follow Christ, through evil report, and through good report—then, whatever doubts and fears, and agitating, conflicting thoughts may rise up to harass your minds, you have the gracious invitation from His own lips, “Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” Cast your burden upon Him, tell Him all your desire, give Him your whole confidence, let the heart, however hard and unbelieving, and sinful, be yielded up to Him, and He will not fail to bring you up to the feast with an intense desire for mercy and grace, which no one else can impart. It is His table. He gives the invitation to such as love Him, however meanly they may think of themselves. And to such, He will fulfil His own words, “If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto Him, and make our abode with Him.”

II.—THE DESIGN AND NATURE OF THE LORD’S SUPPER.

Whatever theories or opinions may have been held regarding this ordinance, these have not arisen from any

obscurity in the meaning of the expressions employed, or from any complex ceremonies, or forms to be observed in its celebration. The language used in recording its institution is plain enough to every one who is disposed to receive words in their proper, reasonable sense—the circumstances in which our Lord appointed it, are easy to be understood. There is nothing ambiguous about them, and then, as to the outward form, and the mode of its observance, and the elements to be taken, we can scarcely conceive greater plainness or simplicity,

It is the fact, however, that very conflicting and opposite sentiments have been entertained respecting the nature and intention of this sacred ordinance. By one portion of the professing Church, it has been elevated to a position which ascribes to its observance, *its mere observance*, a saving power in connexion with the person receiving it, which invests it with the character of a sacrificial offering, even the offering up anew of the Lord Jesus Christ in sacrifice, and which, therefore, separates the minister of religion altogether from others, and gives him the office and privileges of a priest in the sight of God. By another section of the visible Church, there is held to be a mysterious, incomprehensible, yet real presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, personally, in the elements of bread and wine ; so that, although there is no sacrificial presentation of the person of the Son of God, yet there is the actual reception of Him, in some way or other, by every one, in the act of participation. And again, by some others it is looked upon in no other light than as a mere external ceremony, in which we profess our respect for the Lord Jesus Christ, and His Gospel, and our desire to honour Him as the great Teacher and Revealer of the will of God to mankind.

The *first* of these, setting forth what is known as the dogma of transubstantiation, is held by the Romish Church. It maintains that the elements are, by the prayer of the priests, changed into the body and

blood, soul and divinity, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and, that thus there is a real offering up of the same in sacrifice at every time, and in every place, where the ordinance of the supper, or, as it is called in that Church, the mass is celebrated. This doctrine is founded upon the words of our Lord, when He said: "Take, eat; this is my body which was broken for you," and, "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." But every candid, intelligent reader of Scripture must know that when Christ says, "I am the true vine," He is not to be understood as stating that He was really a vine; or when He says: "I am the door," that He was really a door, but only that He represented a vine and a door. "That rock was Christ." The meaning is, that rock was a symbol of Christ. And so, when the language is used in the institution of this ordinance, "This is my body," it signifies, "This is a symbol or emblem of my body broken and bruised for sin."

Further, not only do our senses revolt against the bread being anything but bread, but it is still called *bread*, even after the consecration, "As often as ye eat *this bread* and drink *this cup*, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." Then there is the unaccountable thing that Christ could give His own broken body to His disciples, whilst He was sitting beside them, and before He was crucified; or how there could be many Christs at the same time throughout the world, whenever the ordinance is dispensed. Scripture never asks us, and God never asks us to believe anything that is contrary to our reason, and to our senses, though there may be much in nature and in grace, in the natural and in the spiritual world, beyond our reason. Indeed, this is one of those dogmas in regard to which men are compelled to give up their reason, and understanding and judgment to the demand of fallible beings like themselves.

The *second* theory, that of consubstantiation, held by the Lutherans, and by the High Anglican Churchmen.

has no foundation whatever to rest upon, in the words of the institution. It is a mere expedient to get rid of the absurdity of calling *that* the body of Christ, which our reason and our senses affirm without doubt to be bread. But the truth is, that, instead of getting out of one dilemma, they land themselves in a greater, for how can the body of Christ be contained in that which every one sees and acknowledges to be a piece of bread? The dogma of the real bodily presence *in the bread* does not in the least degree remove the difficulty connected with the demand to believe that the elements are changed into the person of the Son of God.

The *third* idea, though so far expressing the intention of the ordinance, does not contain the whole truth. If there be any significance at all in the ordinance, it must be regarded as designed to honour the Saviour, and to be a visible demonstration of the homage, to which He is entitled. But the words of our Lord in its appointment, the occasion of its institution, and the language of the sacred writers regarding it, seem clearly to intimate that it is to be viewed as far more than an outward mark of respect, that it partakes of the character of a covenanting transaction, in which the receiver pledges himself to the service of Jesus Christ; and the Master of the feast bestows, in the elements that are used, a seal or confirmation to the believer of his possession of all the precious benefits of salvation which are signified thereby.

Let us, therefore, look at the Scriptural nature of the ordinance, and what it is designed to be, in relation to His Church and people.

1. *It is a commemorative ordinance, or an ordinance of remembrance.* It has this character, if the expression may be used, on the very face of it. "This is my body, which was broken for you, this do *in remembrance of Me.*" This injunction arises from the natural tendency of the heart to backslide from God, and to allow our affections to wander away from Him. How ready are we to accept

kindness, to receive gifts from another, and in the act, and at the time of receiving, to express gratitude to our generous benefactor, and yet how little will cause this feeling of thankfulness to become faint, or to disappear altogether! We have no hesitation in condemning ingratitude, and yet we practise it without scruple ourselves. We might appeal to every man's conscience for the truth of this—and especially with regard to the things of God, and all His love and kindness to us in the overflowings of the Gospel provision for our perishing souls. Is it not so, that our hearts do condemn us, as neither acknowledging, nor valuing, nor reciprocating, as we might have done, the wondrous love of God to us in the providing, and in the application of, the work of redemption, by His Spirit, to our souls? We need all the aids which can Scripturally come within our reach, to keep our hearts in a right frame, to stimulate us in our gratitude, and to bind us to the fountain of life and grace with stronger cords.

It is in consequence of this deep-rooted proneness in the heart to turn aside like a deceitful bow, and to forget His marvellous works in their behalf, that we find the Most High appointing memorials, and solemn seasons to be kept by His ancient people, for the purpose of recalling such to their minds, and thus of drawing forth anew their sentiments of gratitude and praise. For example, He appointed the golden pot with the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, to be laid up in the ark, and kept there, as remembrances of His power and goodness in supplying their wants, and of His determination that His appointments shall be honoured. So also, He commanded stones to be collected in the midst of Jordan, as a memorial of His interposition in their crossing of that river into the promised land. And in like manner there was the feast of the passover, the type of the Christian passover, to be observed every year, and to impress upon the hearts of generation after generation the great deliverance from bondage, wrought out for their fathers, and all

the wonderful manifestations of His loving-kindness to them. He thus provided outward means for binding them to His worship and His law, and left them without excuse, when for all that He had done for them they sinned still.

And is not the same principle followed out in the appointment of the sacrament of the supper, as designed to keep in remembrance that death in which the slaying of the paschal lamb had its fulfilment, and that redemption from sin and death and hell, of which the other was but the type and emblem? "This do in remembrance of Me." And what ought we to remember, if not the cross on Calvary, where the flaming sword, which turned every way to guard the way of the tree of life, was met, and which opened the door into the holiest of all? And whom ought we to take part in remembering, according to His own will, and in His own way, but Him who hath not only provided salvation for us at the cost of His own life, but whose voice of love, and the thought of whose favour can alone cheer and comfort our souls in the day of trouble, or when, as earth is fading from our view, and friends can avail us nothing, we have to enter the dark valley of the shadow of death?

It is scarcely necessary to say, that the remembrance enjoined in this ordinance is not a bare, unmoving remembrance of the death of Christ. We may remember the death of Alexander the Great, or of Julius Cæsar, or of the Duke of Wellington, or of Napoleon the First, or of any other eminent men, who, when alive, occupied the attention and the thoughts of nations on account of their achievements, and the scenes in which they were engaged. But that is a cold recollection, which touches not the affections or feelings at all. The remembrance that is required is a penitent, believing, affectionate, absorbing remembrance, melting the heart into godly contrition for sins, which have pierced the Lord of glory—drawing out faith, unswerving faith, in His atonement and prevailing

intercession as the only ground of hope—binding the whole man in soul, in body, and in spirit to the great Redeemer by a tie of love that will never be broken, and leading to entire consecration to the Lord whose we profess to be.

Nor is it merely a remembrance of the work of Christ in general, and of the person of Christ, as Emmanuel, God with us, that ought to fill my mind, when I sit down at His holy table, but the remembrance of His distinguishing love, and of His gracious dealings in bringing me to Himself at first, in making me taste of the precious things of the Gospel, and in putting into my possession a treasure which I would not exchange for all that the world contains—the remembrance of all His mysterious ways in Providence towards me—rescuing me, when I stood on the slippery brink of temptation, pardoning my sins, clearing up my way, and carrying me on with wondrous loving-kindness even to the present day. It is when I thus remember Christ with my heart, and by the teaching of His Spirit, that I shall find this ordinance, as multitudes have found it to be, a source of peace and refreshment, and strength, and elevation to the spirit, in the heavenward journey.

2. The Lord's Supper is *a covenanting ordinance*. The term *sacrament*, from the Latin word *sacramentum*, the oath or engagement which the Roman soldier took to his commander, very early applied by the primitive Christians to the Supper, clearly proves that this was the original meaning of the ordinance. And, indeed, the language of our Lord Himself, in the words of the institution, indicates the same. "This cup is the new testament in My blood shed for you," or the new covenant of grace, ratified and confirmed in My blood, *shed for you*. The words are not general, but particular—blood, not shed for men in general, but for you, my believing people. This ordinance therefore, is not only a sign, representing His death, and all its benefits to be accepted by every one who is willing

but it is an assurance or seal to you who believe, that the covenant, ratified by the blood shed for you, is made over to you in all its abundant provision for the supply of your ever want—and that just as truly as you partake of the elements in faith, looking to the Lord Jesus Christ as the sum and substance of the covenant, so surely shall you become possessors of all that is stored up in that covenant for time and for eternity. “Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness which he had by faith, yet being uncircumcised.” It did not communicate righteousness to him, for that he had by faith—it did not communicate faith, for that was the gift of God. But being a believer, being possessed of faith, circumcision was to him, a seal or assurance that the righteousness which shall be unto all, and upon all them that believe, was his.

In like manner, the partaking of the sacred elements in the Lord's Supper does not impart Christ, or the benefits of His salvation to any one. The Lord, by them, merely condescends to assure every believer, that the blessings which they signify, are certainly made over to him, according to his need. They do not seal the truth of Christ's death, nor do they seal the reality of faith. But they seal to faith, when it is real, the certainty of the fulfilment of all the promises which are annexed to a living faith.

In this view the ordinance of the Supper is most encouraging and strengthening to the believer, whilst he, on the other hand, consecrates Himself to the Lord in truth, engaging to be His for ever, for Him and not for another, to deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Christ, as faithful unto death.

3. The Lord's Supper is *an ordinance of communion*—communion with Christ Himself, and with His spiritual body, which is the Church. This is plainly gathered from the words of the Apostle Paul, “The cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? and the bread which we break, is it not the communion

of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread."

This implies *first*, communion with Christ. It is His table, He invites you to it, and for what end? Certainly to have fellowship with you. When you are invited by a friend to come and partake of his hospitality at the family board, it is that you may hold converse together, not only that you may eat the food provided for you, but that you may interchange your views and sentiments for the cementing of your friendship, and for your mutual guidance and comfort. So when the great Master of the feast spreads this table, and calls His guests, it is that they may commune with Him, with regard to the interests of their souls, and eternity—that He may open up to them the riches of His love, and the treasures of His grace, and entreat them to take abundantly to the satisfying of all their desires—that they may tell Him all they feel, and all they want, that He may confer light or direction, or consolation, or courage, or increase of grace, that they may go forth invigorated and strengthened for the Christian conflict. How many have thus risen from the table of the Lord, saying in gratitude and truth, "Lord! it is good for us to be here." And so may you if you come in earnestness, in humility, in the full assurance of faith.

The language of the Apostle Paul, already quoted, implies *secondly*, communion on the part of the believer with his fellow-believers, and with the whole mystical body of Christ. You profess one common faith, one common hope, one common Lord, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. You are all partakers of that one bread, you all drink of one common Spirit, as the members of one redeemed family, the children of one common Father, and having the one elder Brother, even Christ. And what is there wanting, but a larger measure of the Spirit of Christ, to produce those feelings of charity, and benevolence, and love, and conformity to the will of Christ, which ought to pervade every

member of the body of Christ? It is *there*, surely, at the foot of the cross, and when handling the memorials of the dying love of Christ, that hatred, and variance, and strife, should all be dispelled. It is *there*, in the view of the infinite evil of sin, as shown in the death of Christ, that every unholy passion should be sacrificed on the altar of God. It is *there*, in the contemplation of His obedience unto death for us, that we should learn to be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." And if any of you depart from the table of communion, still with any ground of controversy between God and you, still with animosity against a fellow-creature, or with any grudge against him, still unwilling to surrender everything to the Lord, and to be His in deed, and in reality, it is not from any fault in the ordinance, but because you have kept your heart closed against the full, quickening, mellowing, sanctifying influence of the love of Jesus Christ, and the working of His Spirit.

III. UNWORTHY PARTAKERS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Such, as has already been described, being the nature of the ordinance, and what is implied in the act of communicating, it follows that they who come to it should be those who are in covenant with God, the Father, through Jesus Christ. It is a mere formality—a vain, unmeaning thing, yea worse than that, to every one who ventures to draw near to the table of communion, unpardoned, unjustified, unregenerate in heart, unsanctified in life. Hence, the words which follow the narrative of the institution by the Apostle Paul, contain a serious exhortation and an impressive warning. "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

The expression "eating and drinking *unworthily*," is not to be understood as implying any worthiness in the sense of merit, or the possession of any goodness or righteousness in himself, on the ground of which an individual may be warranted or entitled to seat himself at the table of the Lord. Such an idea is totally opposed to all that is revealed in Scripture regarding the fallen state of man, and the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. "The true circumcision are they, who worship God in the spirit, who rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh."

The language of the Apostle simply reminds us of the necessity of being in that state of mind which is essential to an acceptable and profitable approach to the table of the Lord. For it cannot be sufficiently borne in mind, that none but believers, such as delight in the law of the Lord, after the inward man, should approach that sacred feast. It is for the disciples of Christ (i. e.), scholars of Christ, however ignorant they may be of many things, for all who are willing to be taught by Him, and to do His will, though they may have much to complain of in their hearts and lives, as inconsistent with the character of the Lord's people, and, therefore, causing them, sometimes, to stand in doubt of themselves. Christ *preached to all* ; but He *supped with His disciples*.

If then, there are those whose consciences testify that they are not in heart devoted to the Lord ; who are giving indulgence to their carnal desires, and gratifying the lusts of the flesh without scruple, there can be no hesitation in saying to such, "The table of the Lord is not for you." For, as Paul says to the Corinthians, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils, ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils," or, in other words, ye cannot safely eat that bread, and drink that cup, whilst you know, and are conscious to yourselves, that you are doing the work of Satan, living in sinful practices, and seeking, habitually, the indulgence of your own

selfish desires. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"

The expression, "eating and drinking damnation to themselves," is one which Satan has greatly employed for the discouragement and perplexity, and consequent injury of doubting, yet believing souls, whilst they, who ought to have been thereby awakened, have not been at all troubled. Paul speaks not of those who are filled with anxiety, as to whether they are in a state of grace, whose faith may be weak, whose struggles with temptation and with the body of sin may be severe, and protractedly great, who, in a wrong spirit, we say advisedly, *in a wrong spirit*, keep brooding over their infirmities and weaknesses, and the deceitfulness of their hearts, refusing to take the comfort that is provided for them, in the freeness and fulness of Christ, from whom alone, and not from themselves, peace and confidence are to be obtained. He speaks not of such persons at all in the passage, and therefore no one should make use of it for the sake of distressing the hearts of those whom God hath not made sad. But, He speaks of those who approach the table of the Lord, ignorant of its design, or, if knowing it, yet entirely despising it, who seat themselves among the friends of Christ, whilst in heart they are His enemies, hating His laws, retaining inwardly the love of sin, rolling it as a sweet morsel under their tongues, or it may be, openly casting dishonour upon their profession, and at the same time upon the holy name by which they call themselves. Such persons do indeed provoke the justice of the Lord, they are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, they profane His holy ordinance, and so far from applying to the blood of Christ, for the healing and salvation of their souls, they act the part of the Jews who said: "His blood be on us and on our children." And is it any wonder that they call forth His righteous indignation, either in the form of temporal judgments, or in the blinding of their minds, and the searing of their consciences, and the har-

dening of their hearts, through the power and deceitfulness of sin ?

For, assuredly, God's ordinances cannot be profaned with impunity. Sooner or later, all will learn that He is not to be trifled with, and whilst to them that truly seek Him, though it may be amidst much imperfection, He will manifest Himself in all the riches of His grace, to all who are formal worshippers, mere professors, and unholy in heart and life, His language is: "What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldst take My covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest My words behind thee." How necessary, therefore, the preparation which God alone can bestow! "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked one in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

IV. QUALIFICATION FOR AN ACCEPTABLE APPROACH TO THE LORD'S TABLE.

But whilst the whole tenor of the Divine word, and all right conceptions of the character of God, warn us of the guilt and danger of falsehood in those who approach the holy table of communion, there is at the same time encouragement of the strongest kind to every one who can say to Jesus Christ in truth, "The desire of my soul is to thee, and to the remembrance of thy name."

The great qualification for an acceptable approach to the Lord's supper, is simply, *Love to Christ*. You may feel that there is much in you, and about you, which you have reason to deplore. You may be writing bitter things against yourselves—the remembrance of sins ungodly committed may rise up to disturb you; and conscience may condemn you in many things. But if it is the sincere outgoing of your hearts, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief," "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love Thee, and that my earnest desire is to love Thee more," then there can be no doubt,

that he who never broke the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax, will receive you graciously, and love you freely. If in Him, and in Him alone, is all your hope—if you look to him as the fountain of supply for your every want, then surely it is in communion with Him in His appointed way, and in spreading out your case before him, that you will find the light, and peace, and quickening, and comfort, and joy, which you so much desire. Declining to hold fellowship with Him at His own table, refusing to honour Him thus as your Redeemer and Lord, you keep away from the place where He is present to meet with His people, and where He bestows the blessing.

When he was about to assure Peter of His unaltered interest in, and affection for him, He did not say to him, Dost thou repent of thy sin, thy shameful denial of Me? What hast thou done to show thy sense of guilt? He simply asked him, "Simon, son of Jonas. lovest thou Me?" So with reference to a place at His table. It is the same question which ought to settle the matter in the conscience of every one, "*Lovest thou the Lord Jesus Christ?*"

There are those who set up another standard—an imaginary standard—one of man's making—a certain degree of advancement in the divine life, more or less, as necessary to qualify them for the table of the Lord. And except there is this attainment, they think that neither in their own case, nor in that of others, should there be any participation in "showing the Lord's death," at the sacrament of the supper. It becomes us not to pronounce any judgment on those who thus act, but certainly they seem to deal with the matter of observing this ordinance, as if they were looking within themselves and not to Christ, for their ground of dependence. His own invitation is, "Look to me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else." And the doctrine of the Word of God, and that which we are enjoined to preach, is, that wherever there is *real faith*,

however weak, and *real love*, however feeble, *there* is union with Christ, and of course the covenant right to all the blessings of salvation. Why, therefore, why not also to the signs and seals of the covenant?

Further, some make it an excuse for not coming to the table of the Lord, that they are afraid they will not be able to keep their engagements—that they will dishonour Christ, and that thus their guilt will be all the greater. No doubt he who lives inconsistently with his profession, does profane this ordinance. He does dishonour Christ and His truth. He does give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. And any such have no invitation to come to the Lord's table, and no right to be there. But if your hearts have really been given to Christ, have you not the assurance that he will make His grace sufficient for you, and perfect His strength in your weakness? Are not his promises of guidance and protection and support sure to all them that put their trust in Him? Why then not honour his promises? Why distrust his own words, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand?" it is not faith, but unbelief that would lead you thus to doubt. If your hearts are right with God, and steadfast in His covenant, you may be confident of this, that He who hath begun the good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. What is any man in himself, if not upheld by divine power? "By the grace of God," says the Apostle, "I am that I am." The same will be the language of every believer. And if your daily prayer, and effort in the strength of God, is to be faithful to the Lord, and to His truth, you need not be afraid, grace will be given you according to your need.

Let none, then, who have been made willing in the day of His power, despond or refuse to comply with the Lord's command to His disciples, "Do this in remembrance of me." This ordinance will be the means of quickening believers in the path of duty, of refreshing their spirits

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amidst the disappointments and harassments of this earthly scene, of comforting them under the trials and bereavements, and afflictions of life, and of encouraging and strengthening their souls in the heavenward journey. For it reminds them of all that Christ hath done and suffered for them, as well as of all the rich provision of the everlasting covenant, and, at the same time it binds them to Him with cords of love, with the bands of a man.

But does any one object, "I am not prepared to go to the table of the Lord?" This is the worst excuse of any. It is a plain confession that you are conscious of being in a condition in the sight of God, in which you ought not to be. For if you are not fit to appear at the Lord's table, how are you prepared to stand before Him in judgment? And do you not know that at any moment you may be summoned to His bar? Therefore, hear the message of God himself, "Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope, even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto you." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor wisdom, nor device, nor knowledge in the grave, whither thou goest."

Especially let the young, whose hearts may have been drawn to the Lord, and to divine things, be encouraged to take their place at His table, as resolved to be on the Lord's side, and to follow him fully. Does he not say Himself, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me?" When the Spirit hath in any way touched and impressed your hearts, beware of slighting or putting down such impressions. They are messengers of love and mercy, to guide you to God, and to usefulness here, and to heaven at length. They are not under your control. The sailor cannot command the wind, when he pleases. It is his wisdom to take advantage of it when it blows. So, you cannot command the Spirit at your pleasure. When He works upon your hearts, be thankful, and obey the heavenly impulse. Delay not to close with

Christ, and to consecrate yourselves to Him. This is the only course of safety, of honour, of peace and usefulness, and real satisfaction. If the annals of the Church were spread out before you, you would find that they who have been most highly exalted in the divine favour, and most honoured in the Lord's service for the building up of his cause in any place, have generally been such as in early life gave themselves to the Lord. His word stands true in every generation. "Them that honour me I will honour, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

The Lord, who alone is worthy, who died for our redemption demands, and is entitled to the best of our days, the best of our affections, the best of our services, and for our encouragement it is written, "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age. They shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright. He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."





CANADA

Presbyterian Church Pulpit.

BY THE REV. JOHN CAMPBELL, M.A.,

CHARLES STREET CHURCH, TORONTO.

THE THREE FOUNDATIONS.

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Psalm xi. 3.

"For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Hebrews xi. 10.

"Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," &c. Matthew xxv. 34—46.



WE are all seeking to build for our souls on earth "a lordly pleasure house," and hoping to dwell at last in eternal mansions of bliss. It is a very old aspiration. The Greek loved to think himself under the tutelage of some divinity, and, at the term of all his art, and science, and philosophy, placed an endless life in Elysium beneath the smiles of the Olympian gods. The warlike Roman saw, above the battlements of heaven, a place of grave and dignified repose with Mars and Romulus and the twin brethren. Even the fierce Norseman found not all his joys on earth, but, amid the carnage, with death before his eyes, thought of Odin and flowing

rivers of mead in the halls of Valhalla, as his enduring portion. The blessed light of the true religion, revealed at first to the Jew and, after the coming of Christ, to the Gentile in all its fulness, gave definiteness and reality to this aspiration. Now men know that the "lordly pleasure house" is found where shines the light of God's love and favour, though it come to the veriest hovel on earth ; and that, to them who are thus blessed in time, eternity brings what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man." We all would fain have God's love now, whatever else we may desire along with or even beyond it, and at last would be admitted to the glorious company of Paradise. But the bright habitations of grace here and of glory hereafter do not appear to the eye of sense, nor can they be entered into by any natural powers of man. God and heaven, "the King in His beauty, the land that is very far off," are revealed only to the eye of faith. Our mansions, while we are in this world, are those of faith and hope. Some there are who call these foundations, but this is folly. Faith is the evidence of things not seen, real things which exist independent of our faith ; and hope is displayed in patient waiting, longing and working for what is real, though unseen. I can have no true faith and hope unless I am told of something true to rest these levers of the soul upon ; and I have no right to believe in or hope for anything that I have not good grounds for thinking is real and may be mine. Now, there is such a mansion as I want, a blessed resting-place for the soul here and hereafter, real, and that may be mine, I am told, though I be the very chief of sinners. God sent his Son Jesus into the world. In Him the light of Divine glory, with infinite grace, shines upon sinful man, for He is with His people always, even to the end of the world. He is Immanuel, God with us. He came to be "a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary

land." They that know His name, put their trust in Him; they dwell in Him, rejoicing in His fulness, out of which they receive grace for grace; and for them He, present as well in heaven, is preparing mansions of glory in His Father's house. The mansion of grace in time lies, indeed, between the foundation and that of glory in eternity. It is very lowly and humble now, but its scaffolding reaches far above the skies, where it is to be perfected.

Here is one who claims that the mansion on earth is his, and that the heavenly, as a matter of course, will follow. This double home of grace and glory God's Word has set before him, with the invitation to enter in, and by faith and hope he professes to have made it his. Now comes a serious question. Are you sure your house is not what is often called a castle in the air? your faith and hope a *Fata Morgana*, filling the empty horizon with unsubstantial spires and battlements, domes and minarets, to melt away before the brightness of the sun or the strength of the wind, and,

"like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Leave not a rack behind?"

True, you found it in the Word of God, and can describe the fashion of it; but this is not enough to make your mansion real. The French call our castles in the air castles in Spain, because many needy adventurers used to make their way in society by professing to own property in a region far enough away to place their falsehood beyond the reach of detection and exposure. They had heard or read descriptions of Spanish palaces, and could talk well concerning them, drawing such pictures of their fictitious property as the real owners might have envied. These castles rested on the airiest of all foundations, imagination. It comes to this: Has your mansion any foundation, or does the Bible only furnish you with a model for which you find a pedestal? The house of all God's people here is built upon the foundation of the

apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. The heavenly city, New Jerusalem, has a wall with twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb ; and they rest on that rock which is Christ. Such is the abode for which Abraham and all the faithful looked, a "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." It is useless, and worse than useless, to look for or trust in one that has not, whether it lie upon the sand of outward profession or the air of imagination ; for when the rain descends and the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon that house, it shall fall, and great will be the fall of it. To withstand the storms of life and the great floods of death, your house must have foundations strong and deeply laid. What are the foundations of your trust in God and your hope of heaven ?

For several years past, excavations have been made in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, for the purpose of discovering the site and foundations of the ancient city. Below the remains of hewn stones, the explorers found the rock on which the city was built, tunneled and chambered down almost to the point where it springs from the great limestone bed in the surrounding valleys. In no Holy Land, but in the Holy Book, men dig for the foundations of that eternal city which remains to the people of God, among the testimonies of the apostles and prophets. Their results are very different. Here is one who has a theory about the foundation which is justified as soon as he turns up the soil. Close to the surface he finds many a beautiful stone wall squared and polished, and inscribed with the golden rule of love. He knows the mark of quarryman and builder both. It is the Spirit of the Living God. He that has such a foundation may make sure of his mansion. So this man thinks, and seeks no farther, for he is a Socinian, who believes that God dwells with man from his birth, and that to those who, by deeds of righteousness and love, deserve His grace, He opens the

kingdom of heaven. A wiser man makes his appearance. What if these stones of yours be found to rest on nothing but shifting sand or alluvial soil that may wash away? Where, then, would your mansion be? I will dig deeper. So he digs and comes to a great seamless stone. He clears away the earth from the side of it, and finds that upon it rest the well-cemented stones of love. That rock is Jesus Christ, and the mortar which binds it and the hewn stones together is faith. I will stop here, says the Armilian, lest I should get beyond my depth. Then comes a third excavator. He is not satisfied yet. All looks well; but, suppose flood or earthquake come this way, will this great rock still stand firm? He digs down to see if there be anything lower still. Soon he uncovers the spreading base of the rock. It lies deeply imbedded in the strata below, springing from a base firmer than the everlasting hills, rooted in the great rock system that clasps all the earth in its embrace, beneath continents and seas, without beginning, without end. He will build on these foundations for they rise from the sovereign grace of God the Father. Men call him a Calvinist, but he is simply one that receives the whole counsel of God.

I.—FIRST FOUNDATION.

Now all of these are real and true foundations, the presence of the Spirit attested by love, the work of Christ appropriated by faith, and the mercy of the Father apprehending the sinner, as it sent forth the good Shepherd to find the one that had gone astray and give His life for the sheep. Men mistake when they separate them or stop short at the first or second. Luther even made the mistake once of omitting the upper foundation, and called the Epistle of James, the Epistle of the devil, because in it the Apostle insists upon the necessity of love and good works to salvation. He that will have a clear view of his heavenly mansion must be shewn by a greater than Paul the more excellent way, must know that he has passed

from death unto life by his love of the brethren. John, the patriarch of Alexandria, was one in whom the Spirit dwelt, a kind-hearted, loving man, ever prompt to relieve suffering and do good to the poor. But his bishop, Troilus, was a man of a different disposition, keen and covetous, yet withal anxious to stand well in God's sight now and ever. One day, the patriarch and his bishop journeyed, when there met them a concourse of poor Christians who had been called to suffer for Christ. "Let us relieve the friends of Christ, brother Troilus" said John. As the patriarch had left his purse at home, this was a call upon the liberality of Troilus, who, to his great grief, expended some thirty pieces of gold upon the fugitives. Going home, he straightway fell ill for grief and sorrow, took to his bed and drew to the very point of death. John heard of this, and, grieving for Troilus, knowing at the same time the cause of his complaint, sent to him the thirty pieces and a letter telling the bishop that the money he had expended was to be regarded simply as a loan. No sooner did his eyes rest on the broad gold pieces than Troilus revived; the fever departed; his anxious mind became calm; and sweet sleep visited him. In his sleep he dreamed. First he saw a goodly mansion fairer than any he had ever known, built of marble and gold, and adorned with rarest skill and workmanship. In the centre of it was a magnificent portal, fit for proudest kings to enter through. Against this portal lay a ladder, and, at the top of it, an angel stood, who had just finished engraving, "The everlasting mansion and resting place of Bishop Troilus." The sick man's heart was glad at the sight, and he prepared to enter in, when the vision faded and he awoke. Again he slept, and once more beheld the mansion, which seemed more glorious than before. Again he would enter in, but One, stern of aspect, met him and pointed his eyes to the inscription above the portal. The angel was there still, but, by order of the stern one, he had erased what was written before, and engraved new cha-

racters, so that now it read, "The everlasting mansion and resting place of John the patriarch which he bought from Bishop Troilus with thirty pieces of gold." It is said that Troilus repenting sent back the money and kept the mansion. The aim of this is not to show that good works merit heaven, but that they vouch for His presence whose leading assures us that we are the sons of God and heirs of the kingdom. "Come ye blessed of my Father" says the Judge at the last day; "for I was an hungred and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty; and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me." The first foundation is love to the brethren, the fulfilling of the whole law, the fruit of the Spirit. He that loves not is in death; his are the dry bones still; he has known no resurrection with Christ. We must exalt love—habitual, universal, unostentatious love. Prophecies shall fail, tongues shall cease, knowledge shall vanish away; but charity never faileth. At that day when men shall be rewarded according as their deeds have been, many a life that has been deemed sublime will appear mean and worthless. Knowledge and emotion, brave deeds of warfare or self-abnegation shall go for nothing. Where are the hewn stones with the golden rule and quarry mark? On them alone is reared thy heavenly mansion.

But stay! there are three crosses on Calvary! and on one of them hangs a man justly receiving the reward of his crimes. A few more hours will end his career on earth: then he fain would enter the kingdom of heaven. If, as the Socinian says, works are the sole foundation of the inheritance, there is no hope for this man. But he turns his dying eyes on Jesus and humbly prays "Lord remember me when thou comest into Thy kingdom." No word of the upper foundation (for after all it is contained in the fulness of

the next) is spoken by the Saviour at his side. But bold faith has already built the mansion on that Lord's dying love ; and now from Him the answer comes that makes assurance strong "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Or, again, we go back to the days of the holy King David. He has delighted his soul with the well ordered and God glorifying life he leads. Here is a man fitted by God to abide in His tabernacle and dwell in His holy hill.

" For him the kingdom of the just,
Afar doth glorious shine.
And he the King of kings shall see
In majesty divine.

Alas no ! God plunges him in the ditch and his own clothes abhor him. " Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Cast me not away from Thy presence and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." The foundation seems swept away altogether, as, in the case of the thief, it seemed never to have been laid. I say *seem* in each case, for in neither was the upper foundation of the Spirit's laying really absent. Yet if David had rested only on that foundation, his house for eternity must have been in ruins. " By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Good deeds spring from and do not lead to justification. They may be scattered to the four winds of heaven by sudden temptation or the gradual uprising of the old Adam ; burned up at last as the wood, hay and stubble that mingle with gold, silver and precious stones : but in the justified the builder, who is the Spirit, never leaves His post or ceases to set the polished stones in order on the seamless foundation below, the tried foundation stone, the Rock of ages.

II—SECOND FOUNDATION.

These instances teach us to dig deeper than the foundation of the Socinian. He tells us that on good deeds,

the evidences of sanctification, we must build our mansion of faith and hope. But we ask on what basis that sanctification rests. His answer may be of two kinds, differing according to the measure in which he holds his pernicious error. First, and this is the worst case ; he may reply that sanctification rests on the basis of man's free will, acting in accordance with the natural goodness of his heart ; so that our human nature has but to follow its bent towards virtue and holiness to be accepted of God, and judged worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. We do not wonder at the heathen speaking thus. We are not astonished to hear the voice of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Roman Emperor and pagan philosopher, crying out, while conscience and experience gave it the lie, "How great is the power of man ! He is free to do what he well knows that God will approve, and to receive with resignation all that God may please to send him." But these are not Christian judgments. A British monk, Morgan or Pelagius, who visited Italy and Northern Africa in the beginning of the fifth century, and there met with an uncompromising opponent in Augustine of Hippo, that great champion of the truth, was the first in the communion of the Church to spread abroad such false doctrine. "Man is born now," he said, "with as much ability to do the will of God as was Adam." The Psalmist did not know this, for he said "Behold I was shapen in iniquity ;" nor He that taught Isaiah to say of Israel, His own people, "I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb." How different from the teaching of Pelagius is the short description, given in Genesis, and often repeated in Scripture, of what man was and is in God's sight ; "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Paul the Apostle was in labours more abundant than any that ever held the Pelagian error, and yet he said, "I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." But, secondly, his answer may be, that

although man by nature is not wholly inclined to what is good, God, of His goodness, grants grace to him, whereby he is enabled to glorify God and gain eternal life. Such was the answer given by Lælius Socinus, an Italian, who died in Switzerland, and his nephew, Faustus, who established the Unitarian system of unbelief in Poland and Transylvania, in the sixteenth century. They so misread their Bibles as to deny to the Divine character the attributes of holiness, justice and truth. Here their great error lay. They were right in holding that the work of the Holy Spirit (not however recognized as a person by the Socinians), who is the author of all sanctification, is indispensable for entering the Kingdom of Heaven. They were right also in recognizing the grace of that Spirit as present, in a measure, with all men, and specially with them that attain everlasting life. They were wrong, however, in pointing triumphantly to the text, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ; for I was an hungry and ye gave me meat, &c." For they lost sight of this fact : the performance of these actions on the part of those whom the King addresses, or their disposition to perform, was a requirement, a thing necessary for entering the Kingdom of Heaven ; but a requirement is not the procuring cause. A court dress is a requisite for appearing in the royal presence. The man was cast out from the marriage supper of the King's son because he had not on a wedding garment. But no court dress in the world would make some men fit to appear before their monarch ; no wedding garment even entitles any to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. The King's free invitation is the ground of acceptance in his own court. "Well," says the Socinian, "go back, if you will, to the free grace of God." Now the Book of the free grace of God not only does not recognize on the part of the natural man any power to comply with such an invitation had it been issued, but it does not recognize such a relation naturally

subsisting between God and man as that He could invite sinners into His holy presence. For it reveals man as exceedingly sinful, altogether unworthy of favour, a rebel, a fit subject for eternal condemnation. There is nothing, spite of all the Socinian's pretensions, either in man's nature, or in what he calls the revelation of God's grace, to build sanctification on. "But," cries this interminable reasoner, as he turns away from the Word that condemns him, "I will show you good men in whom the spirit of goodness must assuredly dwell, for every good and perfect gift is from above; men who recognize no other foundation of the heavenly mansion, and find in that very goodness in part their earthly instalment of the everlasting portion." It is very true that every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights. But the father of darkness may reign where they only dwell. Fire and water, iron and gold are good gifts of God; yet Sodom was destroyed by fire, and the whole of the first race of mankind, with the small exception of Noah and his family, perished by water. Men have turned the steel against each other's breasts, and for gold have bartered their own immortal souls. So men use the goodness of God. How do sinners dare to call that a foundation of heavenly mansions which is but the stepping stone to repentance, for it is to repentance first that God's goodness, whether found without or within man, calls. Nay, in styling his virtues the gifts of God, the unregenerate really condemns the foolish Socinian system; for how can that which is God's entitle to life eternal? They who, without a special work of Divine grace, live well and honestly and charitably, are as bankers to whom are committed large sums of money on behalf of the owners. If the bankers possess nothing over and above these deposits, if they themselves are bankrupts, all the wealth of others will not avail them, or save from the clutches of the law. It is as such that the Bible addresses the best among natural men—not as rich, but wretched

and miserable, and poor and blind and naked. Ye that build on talents lent are speculating on God's foundation. He will remove the deposit with life if not before ; your house will fall ; your credit and reputation and happiness depart for ever. Ask, for this is a great and important question, Why is God good to me, a sinner ? The answer of His Word is not far off—" Knowest thou not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ?" The first step in that repentance is a conviction of utter poverty and hopeless ruin. While in this state there stands One and cries (strange words to the ear of the penniless) " Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." And, yet more strangely, a voice from the past, but with the same accents, echoes, " Yea, come, buy without money and without price." Buy without money is just another way of saying : Receive the gift. There is only one great gift in the Bible, a gift that includes every other, even these very good and perfect gifts on which you pride yourself. It is the unspeakable Gift of God. The faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance is not the Socinian's motto " God gives grace to win grace and glory ;" but " Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." If thou knewest the gift of God thou wouldest ask of Him ; for " God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." You are seeking the foundation of good works. It is the gift of God, for " other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." " Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious ; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded."

Justification must precede sanctification. God's gift must be one that makes him who receives it righteous in His sight, without any righteousness of his own. There

must be a basis on which the Spirit's work may stand, and that is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. For we read in the Word that the Spirit comes for sanctification as the gift of an ascended Saviour, who, from the seat of His mediatorial glory, sends down this other Comforter. Faith in the work of Christ, as the mortar that binds the stones of love to the great seamless stone, must precede, or, at least, be coincident with, the sanctifying influences of the Spirit. On that great day of Pentecost, when the multitudes from all lands heard, in Jerusalem, the simple story of Christ crucified, and beheld the evidence of His mighty power as Ascended Lord, Peter replied to the trembling ones that cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." The Spirit Himself is to be tried, as He dwells in man, by the test of the lower foundation. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God : every Spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God ; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God." If your spirit be not found building upon the true foundation, God will say of it at last, I never knew you. How simple the command, and the promise that secures the mansion : "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This is the better foundation, deeper and surer than all man's works, however divine their origin ; for upon it they must all be based. What though the fire of the last day devour all my works, the foundation must stand secure, and on that tried foundation my mansion for eternity is based. Let winds and floods arise, they cannot remove, or for a moment shake, the perfect finished work of the eternal Son of God.

A Christian lies upon his death-bed, and friends draw near to comfort him in his last moments. They speak of his devout and blameless life, of the good he has done in

the church and in the world, of the evidence of divine grace in his heart. Is this music to the ears of the dying man? Does it, like Amphion's lyre of old, cause the stones of the heavenly mansion to fall into glorious order before his soul, as it hovers on the brink of the eternal world? Far from it; it is a painful discord. It is tearing his mansion down, and every renewed commendation seems a hand reached forth to pluck a stone from its place; for he knows the worthlessness of all these works. "Away, away," he cries, "with all that is called mine! None but Christ! He is the true foundation. Of Him are the mansions of glory, which He has gone on high to prepare. 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy God saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.'" This is the foundation which Luther re-discovered when Romish error had overlaid it for more than a thousand years. He heard the divine voice that told him where the foundation was, in the monk's cell at Wittemberg, while he studied to teach his students the truths of a Bible he did not understand. He heard it at Bologna, lying upon what he deemed a bed of death, and lamenting the stroke that hindered him from entering the city which at that time he did not scruple to call the holy and eternal, but in which will be found at the day of judgment the blood of many martyrs. At length he reached Rome. A staircase was there, which men pretended had been brought by angel hands from Jerusalem, and to him that on his knees climbed that staircase would be granted the forgiveness of his sins, past and future. Luther began the ascent of Pilate's staircase, and, on his knees, sought to win the favour of heaven, when the old familiar voice of Wittemberg and Bologna sounded in his ear words that never before had so touched his heart: "The just

shall live by faith." He fled with shame from the place of his proud humiliation, and soon, as to blind Bartimæus so to him, came the more blessed words of the Son of God : "Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace." With that inner peace of soul, his feet set upon the rock, his goings established, Luther went forth to his holy warfare, girding on his Christian armour, and carrying aloft before all the world, and in face of the opposition of Pope and Emperor, man and devil, the words that declared the foundation on which that fearless heart was stayed : "Justification by faith in Jesus Christ."

Again we take up the words which the Socinian failed to understand : "I was an hungred and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger and ye took me in ; naked and ye clothed me ; I was sick and ye visited me ; I was in prison and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred and fed Thee ? or thirsty and gave Thee drink ? When saw we Thee a stranger and took Thee in ? or naked and clothed Thee ? Or when saw we Thee sick or in prison and came unto Thee ? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." The key of the passage lies in this : they had received the disciple in the name of a disciple, not as a mere matter of humanity, and so received a disciple's reward. Why should they care for the disciples of Christ more than for other men ? It was the love of Christ that constrained them. The love of Christ's people, nay the true, unselfish, evangelical love of any man, is based on an apprehension of the infinite love of the Saviour. He only who loves Him that begat can love them that are begotten of Him ; he must love the Friend of sinners that will learn to love sinners themselves. The love that begets love to the brethren has its birth-place at the cross of Jesus. It springs into life in answer to the

question put by a crucified Saviour to a believing disciple : " Lovest thou me ? " There is no true love in any heart until Christ comes to take possession, and furnishes that heart with heavenly grace. The stones of love will be multiplied and set in glorious order, only in proportion as the believer learns " to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height ; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Faith in that love is the link that binds man's poor life to God's great foundation, and makes its future glorious—" the faith that worketh by love."

III.—THIRD FOUNDATION.

Is there anything deeper than the work of Christ, and the faith that binds me in the bundle of life with Him ? The Arminian is contented to stop here. Can any stone equal this ? he asks. Do we not dishonour the foundation by asking the question ? The stone is indeed glorious. It is the great foundation on which alone the heavenly mansion may rest, but it is a stone cut from the mountain, though no human hand had part in the work. Jesus, the Son of God, as Son of Man, He who wears our nature in Heaven, whose glorified body bears the marks of thorny wreath and nails and spear, came to earth as the Father's servant. Hear Him speak of coming to do that Father's will. Listen while He prays to that Father as one who has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given Him. Mark the words : " God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ rests upon the love of God. How is it in regard to the faith that binds to Christ ? The Spirit sanctifies him whom Christ justifies ; and the Saviour justifies all that have faith in His atoning blood and perfect righteousness. Love is made a condition of eternal bliss, and faith of love ; but what is faith conditioned upon ? Some say it is unconditioned ; others reply vaguely that it depends

on circumstances ; and thousands dare not say what is its foundation. Many arguments in regard to it are like the statements of the Hindoos respecting the foundations of the earth, which rests, according to them, upon an elephant, the elephant standing on the back of a tortoise, which lies upon a coiled-up serpent ; beyond this they cannot go, leaving the inquirer as unsatisfied as he was when first he asked how the world was upheld. Imagine the great mountains of Jerusalem resting on quicksands, or destitute of a foundation. It cannot be. We must descend deeper into the truth of God. Is there anything that goes before my faith, and on which that faith is conditioned? Yes, there is something that lies outside of me altogether. The disciples disputed among themselves as to who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and Jesus made a little child his text, saying, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost. It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." Does the little child exercise faith as we understand it, or is there such a thing as the imputation of Christ's righteousness and the sprinkling of His atoning blood, without intellectual apprehension of sin and the Saviour from sin? An infant dies, and Christian parents mourn their loss, yet feel assured that their loss is Heaven's gain. They who refuse to look below this act of faith admit that the parents are right ; but how can that be if faith is the unconditioned condition of grace and life? Faith is conditioned, as works are upon it ; for it rests upon the free electing love of God. "By grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God." "No man," said Jesus, "can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me."

"I have loved thee," says the Father, "with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." There is no condition to this. For no good thing in the sinner, young or old, does God bring him to knowledge, faith and love. This love of God for fallen man is unconditioned, and all else is conditioned upon it as the great foundation. Now may we cease from our labours, with holy awe and fervent gratitude to adore and praise, for no power of thought in earth or heaven can reach below the divine act of free sovereign grace. He who devoutly contemplates the wonders of that grace must find in it the end of all reasoning, and, with Him who brought salvation, exclaim "Even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

Much more does this great doctrine appeal to those who look back to "the rock whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence they were digged." The pious and devoted Toplady relates the following memorable incident in his life :—"It pleased God to deliver me from the Arminian snare before I was quite eighteen. Up to that period there was not, I confess it with abasement, a more haughty and violent free-willer within the compass of the four seas. One instance of my warm and ignorant zeal occurs now to my memory. About a year before divine goodness gave me eyes to discern and a heart to embrace the truth, I was haranguing one day in company on the universality of grace and the power of free agency. A good old gentleman, now with God, rose from his chair, and, coming to me, held me by one of my coat-buttons, while he mildly said :—"My dear Sir, there are marks of spirituality in your conversation, though tinged with an unhappy mixture of pride and self-righteousness. You have been speaking largely in favour of free-will ; but from arguments let us come to experience. Do let me ask you one question, How was it with you when the Lord laid hold on you in effectual calling ? Had you any hand in obtaining that grace ? Nay, would you not have

resisted and baffled it if God's Spirit had left you alone in the hand of your own counsel?' I felt the conclusiveness of these simple but forcible interrogations more strongly than I was then willing to acknowledge. But, blessed be God, I have since been enabled to acknowledge the freeness of this grace, and to sing, what I trust will be my everlasting song, 'Not unto me, Lord, not unto me, but unto Thy name give the glory!' We might look to the writings of the great Augustine and the greater Calvin for confessions such as this, but the words of a greater than either of these will suffice:—"It pleased God," says Paul, "who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me." He that calls also keeps. "My sheep," says Jesus, the good Shepherd, "shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." On this great foundation stands the Rock of our salvation, the Messiah, the Sent of God; thus firm and sure stands the Christian's mansion of faith and hope, of grace and glory. What new meaning now lies in the words of the King's invitation:—"Come, ye blessed of my Father." Not blessed as a reward of good deeds, but blessed by God's everlasting love, to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ, and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, are they to whom the King says come. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

"Ah, but," the question may be asked, "what hope

can this great doctrine bring to sinners?" Every hope is here : for God's Word, that sets this doctrine forth, is full of invitations to all, even the chief of sinners, calling them to faith and life. The call is universal—to all that hear the joyful sound : for the great foundation is no partial one. It clasps the whole world in its embrace, although it only appears in the glorious Rock of salvation, on which every sinner is called to build. We cannot by human logic reconcile the universal invitation with the electing love. No human wisdom can ; for, in this respect, God's ways and thoughts are farther above ours than the heavens are above the earth. But our ignorance is no measure of God's truth. We see by our feeble sight of sense no point where these two things meet. Nay, they seem to run in opposite directions. Yet, as those who start, back to back, to traverse the globe on which we live, will, if they hold on their course, meet on the other side, so we know that this great mystery will be solved, and the apparent opposites brought into glorious harmony, when the full orb of divine truth shines upon the raptured faces of the redeemed. Let the sinner learn this great truth. Heaven is not the reward of your efforts, your good works or your faith ; but men are justified freely by the grace of God. That grace calls aloud to you, "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the Bride say come. And let him that heareth say come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely."

"Come, ye blessed of my Father," says the King to them upon His right hand, "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." But how does He speak to them upon His left hand ? How different the address ! He says, "Depart ye cursed ;" but not "of my Father." The Father curses not. He wills not the death of any sinner, but would have all come

to repentance and live. The sinner curses himself with the love of sin, and is condemned already, because he believes not on the only-begotten Son of God. The King says, "Depart into everlasting fire;" but not "prepared for you from the foundations of the world." It is "prepared for the devil and his angels." The sinner chooses freely for himself the lot of devils, ranks himself, by opposition to the Divine government and grace, among the angels that left their first estate, and are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. The sinner builds for himself an everlasting dwelling-place, the materials of which are all his own. His abode is one of endless misery, reared on the foundation of dead and corrupt works, that grieve the striving Spirit. Below these works lies the rejection of Jesus Christ, and, beneath that rejection, enmity to God. If he is to be saved, it must be from the foundation. Enmity must be turned away, and an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ, with an appreciation of the Divine character, take its place; whence shall rise faith in the atoning blood and perfect righteousness of the Saviour; and on this the Spirit's work of sanctification, producing love and all good works. On these three great foundations, distinct, yet all combining in divine harmony of plan, the mansions of grace and glory will be firmly established; and the day that reveals fully the base on which the soul's eternal pleasure-house stands, will glad the eye and heart of the redeemed with a first true sight of the glorious structure itself. From lowest foundation to highest pinnacle, it will all be found to consist of one material—free, unmerited Divine grace.

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